



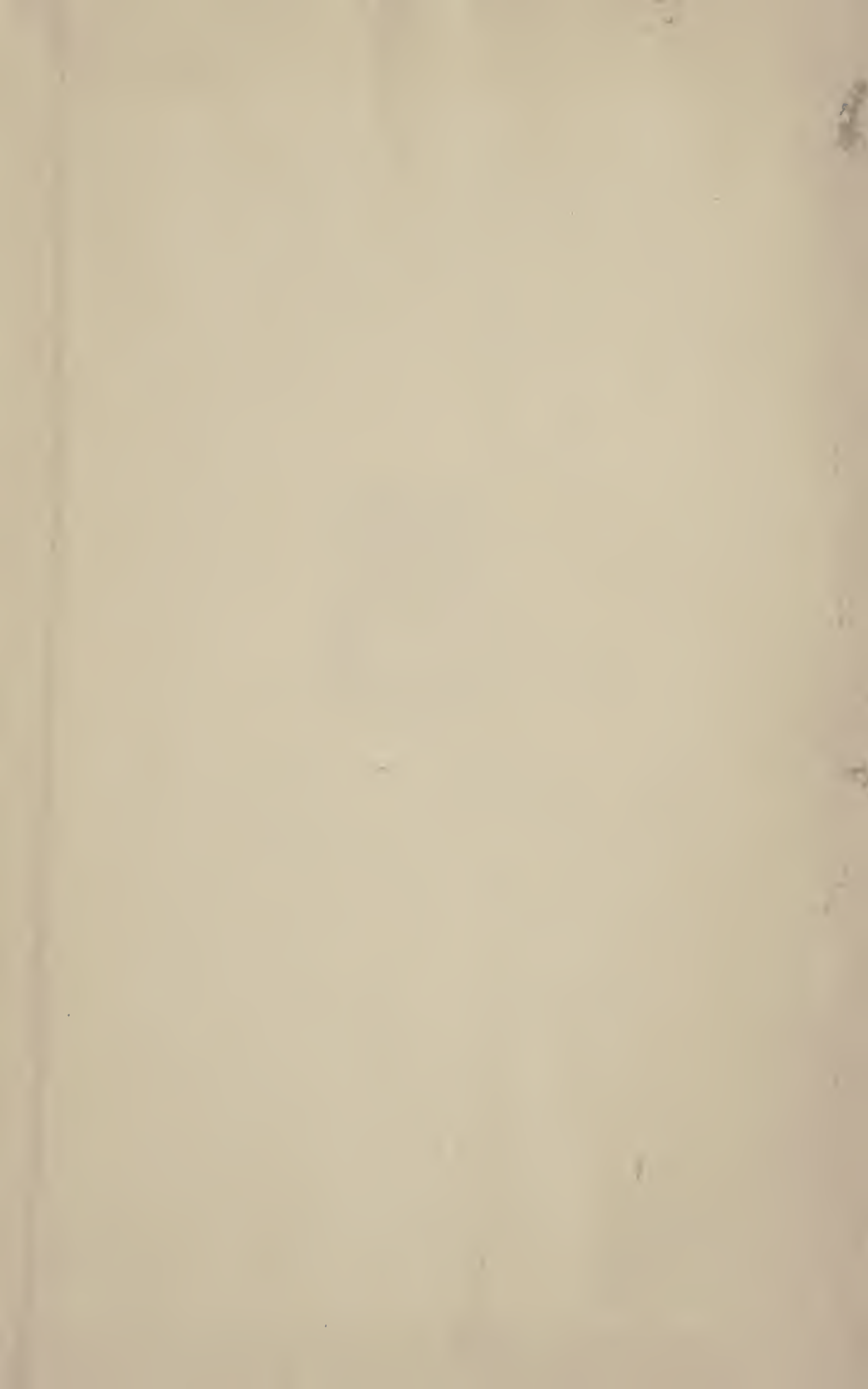


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*The Home at Bethany*

THE  
HOME-SCENES  
OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT;  
OR,  
CHRIST IN THE FAMILY.

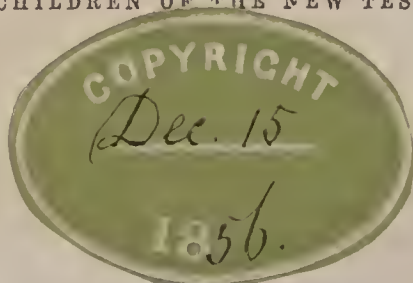
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Let them first learn to show piety at home. — PAUL.

And truly bless'd are they  
Who hear his word and keep it well;  
The living homes where Christ shall dwell,  
And never pass away. — KEELE.

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BY  
REV. THEOPHILUS STORK, D. D.,  
AUTHOR OF "THE CHILDREN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT," ETC. ETC.



PHILADELPHIA:  
LINDSAY & BLAKISTON.  
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TO ALL  
WHO HAVE A HOME ON EARTH TO LOVE,  
OR  
HOPE FOR ONE IN HEAVEN,  
THESE  
H O M E - S C E N E S  
ARE  
Affectionately Inscribed and Dedicated  
BY THE  
AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E.



IN presenting this volume to the public, we have no apology to offer, unless it be for the imperfect manner in which we have actualized the true ideal of the Christian Home. The idea of the Family which we have endeavored to develop and illustrate in these consecutive Home-scenes of the New Testament, we regard as essentially connected with all social progress and Christian civilization.

The Family as a Divine Ordinance, is the first and most influential school of man. Here must ever abide the deepest springs of Social Life. No extraneous education, whether in the week-day or Sabbath school, can be substituted for Home culture and training. The greatest privileges and most sacred responsibilities find their basis here; and we are taught first, "to show piety at Home."

The Family, it is said, is the first element of society. The Home is an institution, "forecast in the very peculiarities of our nature." It is the foundation of all society. It embodies the germ and ideal of the state. It is the nursery of the Church.

In our age of manifold voluntary associations, and the multiplied agencies for reform and social progress, there is, we think, an obvious tendency to neglect this radical school of

childhood, this primordial institution for the advancement of our race in all social virtues and Christian perfection.

What we need more than any thing else, is home-religion — parental authority religiously directed — home-training and discipline—home-happiness and purity. Upon the sanctity of the domestic relations, the intensity of its sympathies, the inviolability of its rights, the sacredness of its responsibilities—upon these, more than upon any other instrumental agencies, must depend the moral purity and elevation of society, the enlargement of the Christian Church, and the consequent education of our race for glory and immortality. Truly and beautifully has the Christian poet sung : —

“Domestic Happiness, thou only bliss  
Of Paradise that hast survived the fall!

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou art the nurse of virtue—in thine arms  
She dwells, appearing, as in truth she is,  
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again.”—COWPER.

We are conscious, deeply conscious of the inadequacy of these discussions to the importance of the subject. But we fondly hope that this earnest plea for home-affections and piety — these *suggestions* upon topics of such intense personal and general interest — these “*Home-scenes*” — may with the Divine blessing be conducive to the great end of the Gospel, the renewal of the soul and the redemption of the home.

PHILADELPHIA, *December*, 1856.

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HOME-SCENES  
OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.

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Chapter First.

HOME.

“Home!

There's magic in that little word;  
It is a mystic circle which surrounds  
Comforts and virtues, never known  
Beyond the hallowed limit.”

THERE is no word in our language so musical to the ear, so redolent of sweet memories to the heart, as the word HOME. It lingers in the soul like some sweet song of our childhood, and its pictured scenes and mother memories, soft and dim with years, mellowed and graced, like other pictures, by the slow and tasteful hand of time, ever rise to the heart —

“Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.”

It is the morning star of life's early dawn, and the evening star of life's setting sun. Whatever may be the

psychological explanation, it is a fact, that our early home never seems so fresh and beautiful as in old age — and every true life repeats in some way the prophet's words — “He shall return to the days of his youth.” Some one in adverting to this peculiarity in our earliest impressions of home, attributes it not merely to the susceptibility of childhood, but to constant retrospection, which is perpetually deepening the image and transcript of those early years. Whatever may be the explanation, the fact is unquestionable that if blessed with a genial and happy home in childhood, it becomes a living memory, influential upon all our after years. Even Goethe, with all his artistic coolness, in the inscription to *Faust*, reverts to his early days in sentiments the most beautiful and touching:

“Once more, sweet visions, are ye floating hither —  
Forms, who of old oft gladdened my dim sight?

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

How with the joy of youth my bosom springs,  
Breathing the magic air shook from your dewy wings!

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

What I possess now seems no longer real,  
But in the past I live, in my soul's first ideal.”

It is as true of the humblest peasant, as of this “majestic demigod” of the German Parnassus. With us all, life as it travels on, recurs ever to its beginning, for it has received its appointed orbit from the same hand that formed and guides the spheres.

If we carry with us through life the memory and influence of our first home — how important the moral tone



and character of this ever-living memory. How important that the home of childhood should be one of moral beauty and gentle affections—that it may be the fountain light of all succeeding days — and in the hallowed retrospection breathe a perpetual benediction!

We are conscious that much that is written so rhapsodically about home and the love of home, is mere cant, and a commonplace flourish of words, or mere poetical pictures of sentiment and fancy. Such representations are often as false to the true ideal of a Christian home as a cottage seen in the distance through green foliage and flowers, may be deceptive to the eye, revealing an exterior beautiful and attractive, whilst all within is discord and selfishness, as infelicitous as it is repulsive.

That there exists a great disparity between the ideal and the real home, no one can question, and it is a consciousness of this fact that prompts the present effort to assist in actualizing to a greater extent the true ideal of the Christian home.

In presenting what we conceive to be the true ideal of Home, we shall not dwell upon what may be regarded as mere external adornments and incidental associations. These are not to be overlooked, as they impart a certain grace and beauty to the home-life, and contribute to the general refinement of sentiment and manners in the social relations, but they do not belong essentially to the normal idea of home which it is our purpose to develope and illustrate. Whatever allusions, therefore, may be made

to these external graces and poetical aspects of home, will be merely incidental to the main discussion.

In this age of multiform institutions for the education of the young and the moral improvement of society, there is peculiar danger of neglecting the domestic instrumentality for the religious development of our race. There is a growing tendency to depreciate the home-institution as a divine ordinance and economy for the culture of youth and the spiritual elevation of society. But whatever facilities in the age may tempt parents to throw off their responsibility, and practically to ignore or disparage the Home-institution as the true normal school of the race, must eventually be productive of evil. Home-education is a law of nature—a duty devolved on the parents by God, and is not transferable by man. Whatever tends to invade this divine constitution, must, sooner or later, bring the retributive reaction.

Conscious of such a tendency in our day, we make this special effort, feeble as it is, to direct anew the attention of Christians to the Home-institution, as a selected instrumentality for the upbuilding of that spiritual temple of the Lord, from which the symbol of his presence and glory is never more to depart.

Upon a subject of such magnitude, and of such vast relations, we can do but little more than offer *suggestions*—suggestions meant to turn your serious thoughts to this subject of

## THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

1. The family is an ordinance of God. It existed as a conception, or an ideal, in the Divine Mind, prior to the existence of man. "The State existed before the individual, says Aristotle. "And, in the same sense, the family may be said to have existed before the individual. That is to say, the family is not a constitution set up by man, as the result of mature reflection. The perception of its advantages did not lead to its existence ; its existence was at first necessary, in order to exhibit its advantages." It is an institution preconceived by the Divine Mind, and for which preparation was made in the creation of man, in the natural and moral instincts and social affinities, which would prompt and adapt him to the domestic economy.

This divine ideal was realized in Eden. Eve, the first woman, was the first wife. The first human pair were united in marriage bonds. Earth's first bridal was celebrated in the primeval Paradise by God himself. As marriage is the basis of the family life, we have in this ordination the divine appointment of the domestic institution. No other institution can show such an antiquity. "The records of it are the first syllables of written history, and the faintest stammerings of tradition." The family is a divine ordinance. And how manifestly appears the divine hand in the preservation of the Home-institution ! How it outlives all the convulsions of kingdoms, and the destruction of empire ! "How tenaciously



every where it clings in the web of human events; and under all conditions justifies its right to be! You might as soon find by chemical analysis, and pluck out with your finger the living principle of a growing cedar, as eradicate from society the indestructible tendency it has to throw itself out into families."

The grand moral end of the family, according to the inspired prophet, is, that "*He* might seek a godly seed." How does this beneficent and world-wide intention, enstamped upon this primeval institution, demonstrate the home to be God's appointment! Forecast in the peculiarities of our very nature, Christianity "recognizes the family, that seminary of the state and church, as a divine institution, but raises it to a higher level than it ever occupied before."\*

2. The next fact worthy of notice is, that the family constitution is an organic whole; having, like the individual, ends of its own to answer, and a similar ultimate relation to the great end—the former harmonizing with the latter. And as, in the Divine government, of which the family constitution is a part, "the glory of God is coincident with the well-being of the creature, so in the family, the honor of the parent and the welfare of the child are coincident, so that the highest interest of the child, the highest honor of the parent, and the highest glory of God, are coincident."†

\* Dr. Schaff's History of the Apostolic Church.

† Patriarchy, by Dr. Harris.



It obviously follows that the family is not a system of vague and undefined relations—and the home is something more than the shelter of gregarious instincts; it is a constitution pervaded by definite laws. Christianity has recognized these laws of the household, and filled the home with sacred duties and immortal affections, and given to its relationship an eternal sanction. It has placed first, as the school and the life of all other piety, the piety of Home.

That one word *Economy*, not in its secondary and popular sense, but in its original import from its Greek derivation, condenses the whole religious obligation and responsibility of the home-life. “We may preach the whole Gospel of Christ to the household, through the suggestions of that simple word *Economy*. For it signifies, literally, the Law of the House; the ordering of man’s whole domestic existence; the inauguration of the Divine Will over his dwelling. To the soul surrounded by its natural human relationships, the command out of the mouth of God is, ‘Set thy house in order:’ obey this spiritual economy.”\*

#### THE LAW OF THE HOUSE.

Every family has its law of domestic life—its ruling principle or passion.

Such is the organic relation of the members of the household, that there is unity of life and spirit, inducing

\* Huntington’s Sermons.

by vital contact and reaction oneness of feeling and character, involving the entire home-circle in a common life and practical working. Dr. Bushnell illustrates this "organic unity of the family," by that vivid picture of an idolatrous household, in Jeremiah vii. 18 — "The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, the women knead dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger."

This is a pagan home-scene, and the idol-worship is the common act of the house. The parents and children perform different parts in the sacred offering, and the queen of heaven receives it as one that is the joint product of the whole family. The worship is family worship; the God of one is the God of all; the spirit of one is the spirit of all.

"And so it is with all family transactions and feelings. They implicate ordinarily the whole circle of the house, young and old, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. They act together, take a common character, accept the same delusions, practise the same sins, and ought I believe to be sanctified by a common grace." \*

Now in this age, when the bias of thought is towards individualism, "the idea of organic powers and relations" is well-nigh lost. There is scarcely a recognition of the idea of a church life or family life, or if the conception is retained, it is merely as a speculative abstraction of no

\* Views of Christian Culture, by Horace Bushnell, p. 183.

practical use or importance. And yet this organic unity is predicated of the church, and by analogous reasoning authorized by inspired teaching, may be affirmed of the family organization (Ephes. v.)

Paul in speaking of the church says, Ephes. ii. 19–21., “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone: In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” The idea here of the church, is that of local proximity, and vital union and development. It is a house, but unlike the literal house, which rises by manual additions and superpositions—it grows. The same idea of organic unity is presented by St. Paul, in those passages in which he calls the church the *body* of Christ, and believers the members of this body.

“As a *body* in general, the church is an organic union of many members, which have indeed different gifts and callings, yet are pervaded by the same life-blood, ruled by the same head, animated by the same soul, all working together towards the same end.”\* Now in a somewhat analogous sense, the family is an organic unity. As the church is the dwelling-place of Christ, in which he exerts all the powers of his theanthropic life, so the family is a union of members pervaded by the parental spirit and

\* Dr. Schaff's Apostolic Church.



life, constituting an organic unity of the household. A common life animates every member, inducing spiritual assimilation and prompting a co-operative tendency to a common result.

#### ORGANIC UNITY OF THE FAMILY.

No being possesses an unmixed individuality. Every one is affected by his social relations and affinities. But the child in the family is in a peculiar sense the subject of a power beyond itself, from the organic connection of character subsisting between the parents and the child.

According to Dr. Bushnell, the organic unity of the family is that power of the parents over the children, unconsciously exercised and received, by which the manners, personal views, prejudices, practical motives and spirit of the house, are as an atmosphere which passes into all and pervades all, as naturally as the air they breathe. The child opens into conscious life, under the soul of the parent, streaming into his eyes and ears ; it lives for a time within the moral agency of the parent, and passes out by degrees, through a course of mixed agency to proper independency and self-possession. The general tone and spirit of the house gives the will its first movement, and may be called atmospheric ; for it is breathed into the child's soul before he is conscious of it. Thus all the various moods of feeling, sentiment, and affection propagate themselves in young hearts.

According to this view, it is not so much what parents

intend or plan for their children, as what they are, that is to have its effect. They are connected by an organic unity, not with your instructions, but with your life. All instructions and by-means, cannot atone for the absence of a right spirit and life in the family.

“No mere affectations and will-work, can cheat the laws of life and character ordained by God. Your character is a stream, a river, flowing down upon your children, hour by hour. What you do here and there, to carry an opposing influence, is at best, only a ripple, that you make on the surface of the stream. It reveals the sweep of the current, nothing more. If you expect your children to go with the ripple, instead of the stream, you will be disappointed. Understand that it is the family spirit, the organic life of the house, that which works by an unconscious, unseen power and perpetually—the silent power of a domestic godliness — this it is which forms your children to God. And if this be wanting, all that you may do beside will be as likely to annoy and harden as to bless.”\*

This solemn and responsible aspect of the family relation is but dimly seen, and scarcely recognized by many religionists. Some have stared at Bushnell as a mystic dreamer, and repudiated his theory of Christian culture, based upon the organic unity of the family, as mere sentimental speculations, if not something worse. And yet,

\* Bushnell on Christian Culture.

whatever objections may be made to the technical phraseology or form of this theory, the fact is undeniable, that there is such a thing as a home spirit and life — a domestic atmosphere and life, which we can recognize and feel as we enter, and mingle in the home-circle. In one family it is a spirit of money; in another, social ambition; in another, pleasure; in another, unceasing mutual irritation, where each man is an overreaching Esau; in another, petty anxieties, where every woman is a troubled Martha; in another, it is a felt irreligiousness; in another, it is religious duty, a genial spirit of love and sanctity, a religious home-life. There may be great diversity of temper and character in the individual members of the household, yet you will discover running through them all a certain family character, a spirit of the house, giving moral complexion to the whole. How solemn and responsible the position of parents! They must transmit their spirit and life into their children. Their life will be translated into them, their odor will be forever in their garments, their spirit will be perpetually breathed into their natures, forming character day by day, for salvation or perdition. “If a man were to be set before a mirror, with the feeling that the exact image of what he is for the day is there to be produced and left as a permanent and fixed image forever, to what carefulness, what delicate sincerity of spirit would he be moved! And will he be less moved to the same, when that mirror is the soul of his child?”



This law of the House, call it organic unity or what you please, was ordained originally for the nurture of holy virtue, in the beginning of each soul's history. The introduction of sin, has perverted this beneficent law of the household, and made it a fearful instrument of evil. But every principle of analogy and every right conception of the recuperative economy of grace, lead us to expect that Christianity would take possession of this organic law of the family, sanctify it, and make it instrumentally subservient to the merciful designs of holiness and salvation. So that the very organic unity of the race, which propagates the moral virus of sin, is made a sanctified medium of spiritual life.

It is easy to see what elements of power inhere and operate in the family organism—power, for evil or good. What tremendous issues are dependent upon the ruling spirit and life of the household!

Every family has its law of family life—its ruling principle or passion. And that law—according as it is a law of sin or of holiness—of the world or of Christ, will make the family a tremendous organism of evil and death, or a sanctuary of spiritual life and culture—a church, in which the silent power of a domestic godliness shall mould childhood to virtue, God, and heaven.

As the other aspects and relations of the family will be specially considered in the succeeding chapters of this volume, we now claim attention to the one normal idea of the Family, as the school of childhood, the seminary of

state and church. The development of this idea, will show that the domestic constitution in its original functions, according to the Divine ideal, is as essential as the elementary school of grace to the full effect of the remedial economy, and fundamental to all social progress and Christian civilization.

This high and distinctive aim of the family, was variously affirmed during the theocratic period. When vindicating the inviolable sanctity of the conjugal tie, the prophet asks,\* “Did He not make one? though He had the residue of the Spirit. And why one? That he might seek a godly seed.” The original formation of one man and one woman into “one flesh,” or conjugal body, contemplated the rearing of a pious offspring. Other and inferior ends were to be secured by it, but this was its ultimate design. The Christian ideal of the family is that of a normal religious school for the education of childhood—to which the physical object, the propagation of the race, is subordinate and subservient. Christianity seeks by the consecration of each family, to beautify the world with religious HOMES, as the firmament is gemmed with stars. And thus to make earth a divine school, in which to rear a sinful race for glory and immortality.

As introductory to the consecutive *Home-scenes* brought to view in this volume, we are led to consider this primordial design of the Family, as the elementary school of the race.

\* Mal. ii. 15.



## HOME, THE NORMAL SCHOOL OF CHILDHOOD.

“Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.”

“Break oblivion’s sleep,  
And toil with florist’s art  
To plant the gems of virtue deep  
In childhood’s fruitful heart.  
To thee the babe is given,  
Fair from its glorious Sire,  
Go, nurse it for the King of Heaven,  
And He will pay the hire.”

Home must be the earliest and most influential school. Nowhere else is so much infused into our entire being: and at no after-period of life, are such elements at work, formative of human character and destiny, as in the plastic and impressible years of childhood. Whatever may be our theories of the organic life of home, it is there the soul of childhood inspires the very life of after years, receives the radical principles and moral bias of manhood, the very cast and current of destiny. And hence, how wonderfully has the Father of spirits pre-arranged the scene into which the infant comes for its education! The world into which the little sojourner comes is pre-figured not only to its bodily constitution, but with manifold hidden adaptations and influences, for the gradual unfolding of mind and moral development. So that life is a school from our earliest consciousness. The periods of life are its terms; all human conditions are but its

forms. Families are the primary departments of this moral education; the world is but the material structure reared for the administration of its teachings.

1. The advent of the child is into a world, in which there exists the most wonderful adaptations of nature for the awakening and development of the soul. In early childhood, external nature seems to imprint itself photographically upon the uninscribed and plastic soul. "With what an early care and wonderful apparatus does Providence begin the work of human education! An infant being is cast upon the lap of nature, not to be supported or nourished only, but to be instructed. The world is its school. All elements around, are its teachers. Long ere it is placed on the first form before the human master, it has been at school; insomuch that a distinguished statesman has said with equal truth and originality, that he had probably obtained more ideas by the age of five or six years, than he has acquired ever since. And what a wonderful ministration is it! What mighty masters are there for the training of infancy, in the powers of surrounding nature! With a finer influence than any human dictation, they penetrate the secret places of that embryo soul, and bring it into life and light. From the soft breathings of Spring to the rough blasts of Winter, each one pours a blessing upon its favourite child, expanding its frame for action, or fortifying it for endurance. You seek for celebrated schools and distinguished teachers for your children; and it is well. Or you cannot afford to

give them these advantages, and you regret it. But consider what you have. Talk we of far-sought and expensive processes of education? That infant eye hath its master in the sun; that infant ear is attuned by the melodies and harmonies of the wide, the boundless creation. The goings on of the heavens and the earth, are the courses of childhood's lessons. The shows that are painted on the dome of the sky and on the uplifted mountains, and on the spreading plains and seas, are its pictured diagrams. Immensity, infinity, eternity, are its teachers. The great universe is the shrine, from which oracles, oracles by day and by night, are forever uttered. Well may it be said that "of such," of beings so cared for, "is the kingdom of heaven." Well and fitly is it written of him, who comprehended the wondrous birth of humanity and the gracious and sublime providence of heaven over it, that "he took little children in his arms and blessed them."\*

Influences are thus streaming in upon the child from the great surrounding system into which he has come. Every object soon becomes a book, and every place a school-house. "While we have been teaching him to walk, he has been mentally running and flying in a thousand directions. While we are filling his little hands with flowers, the garden and the field are pouring all their botany and zoology into his mind."

2. But after all, this outward system of nature, is but

\* Dewey — School of Life.



the material structure for the administration of the moral teachings of the family. What the child learns at home, will determine what he shall see and hear in the lighted dome above, or the vocal universe around us.

The fact that the child is introduced by the Divine ordination into the bosom of the family, is in itself an intimation that Home is the true school of childhood, and that in the family, would be found the requisites, for the education of the child in all that pertains to its highest well-being. How beautifully is every thing in the domestic economy, prearranged and adjusted for this educational purpose. The relations between parent and child, and all the social affinities of home, are so many natural facilities, for the training of the young. - The natural instincts and affections are peculiarly adapted and made subservient to the same end. And then, "it is a wise ordination of Providence, that at our outset in life, we should come in contact with human nature under its best aspect; that, under the relation of parent and child, we should form our first acquaintance with humanity."\* By this arrangement the child learns in the tender solicitude and love of earthly parents, to recognize the higher love of its Father in Heaven. The mother wakens earliest in the child the sentiment of love. It is her embrace that first unlocks his heart, and opens its mysterious and unfathomable issues. It is thus, that home is formed for the development and education of the

\* Parkinson's Hulsean Lectures.

heart. Love watches over our birth. The first human feeling extended towards us is a mother's love. The first human force we meet is woman's love. All this tends to waken and unfold the affections, to give them their culture and hasten their growth. Another fact conducive to the same end is, that the child is committed to the parents, with a nature uninscribed and impressible, ready to receive through them the signature of Heaven, and the imprint of the Divine image. It is obvious from these pre-ordained facilities for the education of the child in the family, that whilst other schools may be needful as the supplement of domestic training, there can be no substitute for Home education. Pestalozzi says — "There are no better teachers than the house, or the father's and mother's love, and the labor at home, and all the wants and necessities of life. It is this *domestic* education, which, of all others, is most wanting in all classes under our present system. Without it, *public* education may be good in an intellectual point of view (though even that is difficult;) in a *moral* it must be defective, if not worse. The tendency of modern institutions, fond of masses, and co-operation, and broad effects, and sudden display, is to weaken and limit these home-bred influences."

The hand of God has placed the child in the Home-school, and put in the hands of the parents the key to the recesses of its heart; and, if they fail to use it, those depths remain closed to every other agent. No extra-

domestic tuition can compensate for the want of this normal, divinely ordained school of childhood.

“Drive not a timid infant from his home, in the early spring-time of his life —

Commit not that treasure to an hireling.” . . . . .

3. As the family is ordained of God as the normal school of childhood, it must be the most influential, the most formative of character. The reasons for this assumption are found in the fact, that the domestic constitution is pre-arranged by the Divine Hand for this grand end, in which pre-arrangement are involved the adaptations and facilities to this end, to which we have just referred. In harmony with these appointed requisites in the family for the education of childhood, we may notice that the education of the child begins with the moment of its birth. Its education can be no more suspended than its life. “Prior to its birth, the mother may be regarded as living in the soul of the child; at that moment the child begins to live for a time in the soul of the mother. While the father is yet marking the moment of its birth, its first pulse has already dated its training for eternity.”

The young immortal makes its advent into the family, passive, ductile, impressible. There it is to waken into its first sensuous experience, there to feel the first flush of passion, and the first touch of pity, there to will with the first motive of hope, and there to love with the first gush



of affection. How much begins there! If mind like matter moves in the direction of the impelling force, how momentous is the first impulse. What divergent lines of destiny reach out from the cradle to glory or perdition!

From the earliest childhood, every thing is formative of character. At first, the parents can do but little more than protect the tender germ from ungenial influences, careful that the maternal heaven over it be pure and cloudless, and surrounding the infant bud with the quiet atmosphere of a cheerful home, that it may spontaneously unfold as an opening flower in vernal suns.

During the earliest stages of childhood it is open to impressions, and the character is forming under a principle not of choice, but of nurture. The spirit of the house is breathed into his nature day by day. The variant moods of feeling in the household pass into him as impressions, and become seeds of character in him — not because the parents will, but because it must be so, whether they will or not. “They propagate their own evil in the child, not by design, but under a law of moral infection.” How important the moral atmosphere of the house; in the initial nurture of the child!

4. Gradually, the child passes out of this state of mere passivity, and becomes receptive of influence in the common sense of that term. It responds to the maternal smile and look of love — any kind of sentiment or feeling in the parental face, wakens a responsive sentiment or passion. Next it begins to apprehend the meaning of

words, and is influenced by the parent through the medium of language. "Farther on, the parents begin to govern him by appeals to will, expressed in commands, and whatever their requirement may be, he can as little withstand it, as the violet can cool the scorching sun, or the tattered leaf can tame the hurricane." . . . . During all this time, the parents are transfusing their spirit, sentiments and life into the child, working a character in him, the very transcript of their own, by virtue of an organic power. And as the child, in the wise adjustments of Providence, remains for years in this primary school, the parents have an opportunity, not only of tracing on its heart the first inscriptions which it receives, and of moulding its character while it is in its most impressible state, but of continuing to retouch and deepen those impressions for a succession of years.

5. Take as a final consideration, showing the transcendent importance of this school in the family, the familiar fact, that the impressions received there, are the most lasting and influential. "Every first thing continues forever with the child; the first color, the first music, the first flower, paint the foreground of life. Every new educator effects less than his predecessor; until, at last, if we regard all life as an educational institution, a circumnavigator of the world is less influenced by all the nations he has seen than by his nurse."\*

We need not dwell upon the enduring and formative

\* Richter's *Levana*.

potency of the early impressions of childhood. It is a fact expressed in the convictions, and confirmed by the observations of mankind. The first influences and instructions determine almost to a certainty those which are to act with a governing power on the soul throughout life. It has been said that the man is made at six years of age. The after process is the filling up of the previous outlines. A whole eternity is enfolded in the tender years of childhood. And what gives additional, we may say, momentous interest, to these impressible and formative years, is the fact that there is but one youth in our being. There may be a second childhood, but not a second youth. The precious, momentous period of youth, when it leaves us, passes away forever. There is no Gibeon in life upon which we can rest for a moment, the morning or the noontide. "We cannot rekindle the morning beams of childhood; we cannot recall the noontide glory of youth." Never, no, never! Momentous crisis, — the season of youth! What unutterable interest attaches to the family, the nursery where these germs of immortality are grown; where character is formed for life, and destiny is determined for eternity!

Having thus considered what Home must be as the normal school of childhood, we have virtually anticipated what HOME, as such a school, *ought* to be. As it is the earliest and most influential school, it ought to be the most religious.

The Family, according to the Divine ideal, must be the



## CHURCH OF CHILDHOOD.

As Paradise was the home of man in innocence, so home was meant to be the Paradise of childhood, where the family should pass through a moral probation. How responsible, in this aspect, the position of this primary institution! How beautiful the relations and sanctities of Home, as the sanctuary of childhood — a garden of Eden, without the tempter.

In a truly Christian home, the child is received by the parents out of the hand of God; and while clasping it to their hearts of love, they look reverently up to their higher Father, with the prayer it may be saved in the life everlasting. Such parents receive the child in the name of Christ. The young immortal inhales the spiritual atmosphere of a domestic godliness; the very life and feelings of the parents pass into the child, as impressions, and become seeds of character, and the entire order, peace, and sanctity of the Christian home; “the sacred and cheerful liberty of the spirit, all glowing about the young soul as a warm and genial nurture, form in it, by methods that are silent and imperceptible, a spirit of duty and religious obedience to God. This is Christian nurture, the nurture of the Lord.”\*

Where all the conditions of the Christian home are realized, we believe the child, with rare exceptions, will

\* Bushnell's Christian Culture.

grow up a Christian, and the family be in reality the nursery of the church.

As the general relations of the family will be considered hereafter, we shall glance now at the special conditions of the Christian home, involved in parental duty and essential to the spiritual nurture of childhood.

1. The first condition relates to the reception of the child into the family. "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me." The Saviour indicates to parents in this declaration how they should greet the new-born soul, on its advent into the household — with what feelings to clasp it to their hearts — how to estimate the immortal nursling, and with what grand purpose to conduct its nurture and education. It is not to be received merely with a sentimental admiration, or an indulgent fondness — with selfish aims and purposes; but in the name of Christ. Such a reception is comprehensive of all parental duty to the child. It involves a recognition of the sanctity of the child as an immortal being — as an inheritor of Christ's promises, and partaker of his redemption — as the appointed subject of baptism, of prayer, and of inward renewal — to grow up, under the spiritual culture of home, a disciple of Jesus, a Christian, an expectant heir of eternal glory.

2. Such a reception of the child, in the name of Christ, will naturally lead to its formal dedication to God. This is a duty recognized by all Christians, of whatever name. It would seem, indeed, to be a suggestion of nature, since

we find something like it even among the heathen. As the devotees of Juggernaut are drawing along the idol-car, bearing the god whom they worship, the heathen mother places the hands of the infant upon the ropes; thus early seeking to produce impressions of duty to worship his mother's god. Williams, the missionary, relates, that the mother in the South Sea Islands, even before a child was born, used to go to the temple with the requisite offering, where the priest performed the ceremony of infusing "the spirit of the god" into the child. After its birth, the same rite was repeated. The old Romans had a touching superstition, of holding the face of the new-born infant upward to the heavens; signifying, by thus presenting its forehead to the stars, that it was to look above the world into celestial glories. Christianity gives us the clear realization of that dim, pagan yearning, in a Christian baptism and training. What shall be said of professedly Christian parents who do not discover even the heathen's sensibility, and with all the blessed ordinances of the Son of God in their sight, withhold their children from Christian baptism, and the benediction of the church?\*

Having received the child in the name of Christ, surrender him, in holy baptism, to both the mercy and the authority of the sovereign Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and then receive him from the baptismal font and benedictive arms of Christ as a sacred trust, con-

\* Huntington.



secrated and pledged for God, to be nurtured for Christ and glory.

“And happiest ye, who seal’d and blest,  
Back to your arms your treasure take,  
With Jesus’ mark impress’d,  
To nurse for Jesus’ sake.”

3. This dedication prepares the way for the religious education of the child. As the act of dedication was an acknowledgment of the parents’ dependence on God, this duty of religious training implies his responsibility. In the yet sleeping faculties of his babe, the Christian parent beholds a capacity which is to be developed not only to the limits of time, but to unending issues. Of this parental duty and its method, we remark, that they comprehend:

PRAYER. — Your child, says one, must know, he must see, he must feel, that between your parent-heart and Him who is the infinite Father of all, there is open and conscious communion. This prayer is needful for the parents themselves, that they may have wisdom and grace, faith and patience, in their responsible work. It is needful, as the ordained method of securing the divine blessing upon the child, and of giving power and efficiency to all other means for its religious culture. Besides, this confiding daily intercourse between the household and Heaven will awaken in the child a conscious relation to the unseen and the eternal. And as the vague dreams of Infinity and dim presentiments in the depths of the soul are awakened, he is prepared to look up, as the

maternal finger points to Heaven, and to find in God that which he had previously found in his parents. Prayer, with and for our children, is among the very first duties in this domestic education.

“Hold the little hands in prayer. . . . .

Let him see thee speaking to thy God ; he will not forget it afterwards ;

When old and gray will he feelingly remember a mother’s tender piety,

And the touching recollection of her prayers, shall arrest the strong man in his sin.”

**BIBLICAL TEACHING.**—Receiving the child in Christ’s name, it is to be studiously taught Christ’s Gospel. Patiently and humbly must the great facts, and personages, sublime truths, touching incidents, and beautiful imagery of the Bible, be familiarized to the mind of childhood. “Its psalms must be sung into his soul. Its beatitudes and commandments must be fixed in his remembrance. Its parables must engage his fancy. Its miracles must awe his wonder. Its cross and ark, and all its sacred emblems, must people his imagination. Without that Bible, no child born among us can come to Him, whom only the Bible reveals.” The Christian fidelity of parents, in this duty, should be such as to justify the affirmation concerning each one of their children, as of Timothy — “that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.”

**EXAMPLE.**—No formal teaching, or devotions, will avail

without a holy life and example. According to the laws of the house already referred to, it is not so much what parents plan and intend for their children, as what they *are*, that is to have its effect. The child is connected by an organic unity, not with your instructions, but with your *life*. And your *life* is more powerful than your instructions can be. The spirit of the house which is your spirit, the whole working of the house which is actuated by you, the silent power of home piety, it is this that will form your children to virtue and godliness. What you *are* they will almost necessarily be.\* Such is the constituted relation of the family, that you must transmit not only your name and physical temperament, but breathe into your children, your very spirit and life. “Singly and solely on the supposition that the spiritual life of the parents is transplanted into the children, does the communication of corporeal life become a blessing.”† It is, therefore, by a religious life, that this Christian nurture of childhood is to be secured.

God hath set Israel in families, that the piety of the parents may infold the spirit of the child — embosoming the young immortal in the love of God, so that it grows in the nurture of the Lord, as naturally as the bud unfolds its flower and beauty to the summer air and sun. Let those who occupy the responsible position of parents, entrusted with the religious education of children, be

\* See Bushnell, on the Organic Unity of the Family.

† Tholuck — Sermon on the Mount.



careful to maintain a life of piety, "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way."

As inclusive of all these requisites of religious culture and training, let the house be set in the spiritual order, let the home be Christian in its spirit and entire economy. Aristotle ordered that the artists should paint or represent nothing in the temple, in sight of the children, but what was pure and beautiful; that their reading should be such as to foster purity, lest by the corruption of the youth, the state should be endangered. From their childhood, they were to see or hear nothing, that would, in the least, diminish their reverence for the gods, for this would be subversive of their religion. This teaching of the Grecian philosopher, is worthy of a Christian baptism and application. Let the home of childhood be Christian in its spirit, and in all its domestic economy. Let the pictures and books be such as to foster a taste for the pure and beautiful. Let the recreations be such as are congenial with enlightened piety. In short, let the home be religious in form and spirit. There let God be acknowledged in praise and prayer. There let the eternal world be unveiled, and every blessing bring it near in gratitude, and every trial draw down its consolation. There let every morning unite the family as at the gates of heaven, and every evening see them part with love and benediction, as to their final rest. Such a home will have a religious atmosphere, that will counteract the evil influences that surround the child

in the world without. There is a fable, in German literature, of the daughter of an Erlking, whose business it is to tempt little children away from parents and home. Temptation is the Erlking's daughter that never dies. In a thousand winning forms she seeks to lure the unsuspecting youth from home, from virtue, from happiness, from heaven. Let home be such as to shield the child from the assaults of the great adversary, and fortify him against the seductive pleasures of the world.

“From the foul dew, the blighting air  
Watch well your treasure newly won;  
Heaven's child and yours, uncharm'd by prayer,  
May prove Perdition's son.”

Happy the childhood that is blessed with a Christian home! Happy the parents, who so fulfil the conditions of the Christian household, that their children can say, as one said of his parents, “Well, if there are only two Christians in the world, my father is one and my mother is the other.” Such homes and such parents are the greatest blessings and benefactors of the world. We cannot well over-estimate the blessings that must flow from

#### CHRISTIAN HOMES.

“Bright be the spot, and pure the ray,  
That wins the infant's eye;  
A path of light, a glorious way,  
To guide his soul on high.”



Here, as the school of childhood, abide the deepest springs of social life. All life flows from the centre, outwards. And whether we seek to promote the general virtue and order of society, advance the special objects of philanthropy, or the higher aims of Christian culture in the grander mission of the church, we cannot more directly and efficiently accomplish any of these noble purposes, than by learning first according to the Apostolic injunction, to show piety at home. It is the foundation of all society. It embosoms the germ and ideal of the state. It is the nursery of the Church.

#### F A C T S.

“Facts may be cited, almost indefinitely, to establish the connection of the family and church. In one town during a revival-season, in 1812, seventy-nine persons were added to the church, and all but four were the members of pious families. In another town, as the fruits of a revival in 1811, one hundred were added to the church, eighty-eight of whom were from pious families. In yet another town, four-fifths of the converts, during a revival in 1815, belonged to religious households. In another still, nine-tenths of all the conversions during a powerful work of grace, in 1831, were connected with pious families. And thus in nearly every work of grace which refreshes Christendom from time to time, it will be found that very few are gathered from families in which the parents are not religious. The great mass of the

additions to Christ's flock are from the families of the church. The history of every revival will prove this from accurate statistics."\*

Some years ago, upon inquiry it was ascertained, that out of eighty theological students in the Andover Theological Seminary, seventy were from homes of piety, where both father and mother were devoted to the Lord. In another theological seminary, all but six of the students had come from pious families. A writer estimates that of all the ministers who are preaching the everlasting Gospel, ninety-nine hundredths of them came from families where one parental heart, at least, was in true sympathy with Christ.

How do such facts put the seal of the Divine favor upon the pious home! How do they signalize the Christian household as the mightiest agency for all social elevation and progress — furnishing virtuous citizens for the state, nurturing living members for the church, and peopling heaven with redeemed and glorified spirits!

O, if we could speak to the *five millions* of Homes in our land, we would urge upon the *living* heads of these families, the solemn and momentous responsibility of making their homes Christian, in form and spirit. We would ask each one to consider what stupendous issues are dependent upon a single family! "Not only do many living palpitating nerves come down from parents and

\* Thayer — Hints for the Household.

friends, and centre in the hearts of their children ; but, as they shall advance in life, other living and palpitating nerves, which no man can number, shall go out from *their* bosoms to twine round other hearts, and to feel their throbs of pleasure, or of pain, of rapture, or of agony !” How many destinies of others are linked with theirs ; for aught you know, the salvation of ten thousand immortal souls may result from the religious education of a single child. It has been estimated that one revival of religion, which took place in Yale College, under the presidency of Dr. Dwight, raised up ministers who were instrumental in the conversion of fifty thousand souls in one generation. What unutterable results were instrumentally dependent upon the simple fact, that Dr. Dwight was blessed with a Christian parentage, and his early years were spent in a Christian home !

For the sake of your children, let your home be sanctified by religion ; let your teaching and example, as well as the whole spirit of the household, be such as shall secure their growth in the nurture of the Lord. Then may you say to your children, as a dying parent recently said : “ Such have been my instructions to you, that you will be ashamed to meet me at the day of judgment unprepared.”

For the sake of the church, and the salvation of the world, we would urge this plea for the Christian home. We would plead for the “ church in every house ” with the altar, the incense, the voice of prayer, and the song of praise. There should be a church in every house ; there



must be, or the great design of the domestic institution, in its benignity to childhood, and its beneficent relations to the church and the world, will be a sad and deplorable failure. The family was ordained of God for the religious nurture of childhood. The infant members come into it as the symbols of celestial purity. It has no adequate explanation, except as it prepares them for that state which they symbolized. If the earth is a temple, the family was its "holiest of all;" and all its divinely selected arrangements and influences were meant to be ever crying to each other, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," as the continuous service of love and worship trained up its members for heaven.\*

We conclude with a brief *excursus* upon

#### THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

"Paul . . . unto Philemon . . . and to the church in thy house, grace to you and peace, from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

The expression "church in the house" occurs in several of Paul's Epistles, and designates the little band of disciples that met on the first day of the week, in some private house, for the worship of God. Or the salutation may be regarded as addressed to a family, all of whose members were Christians. For Origen says that when a whole family was converted, the salutation was sent to the church in such a house. And is not such a family, in a

\* Patriarchy, by Harris.

subordinate sense, a church? The family was the oldest church, holding its worship before temples were built, or priesthoods formed; and the true temple and the true priesthood, says one, instead of repealing, do but consecrate anew the patriarchal church, and Moses and Jesus both give new power and beauty to the covenant with Abraham and the individual family.

A church in every house — what a blessed realization! But how can this be? You have the answer in the benediction of Paul upon the household of Philemon, “Grace to you and peace, from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Grace and peace! these are the true consecration of the household. Grace, enriching all with God’s favor through faith in Christ Jesus; peace, drawing all hearts into unity, and harmonizing all the duties and home relations, by the assimilative power of divine love. The home is Christianized. “The house,” says Dr. Bushnell, “having a domestic spirit of grace dwelling in it, becomes the church of childhood, the table and hearth a holy rite, and life an element of saving power.” O that such households were multiplied in our land, that the church and home might go together, and unite our nation under the dominion of Christ, as under the empire of civil law! The blessings which flow from the church in the house are eloquently represented by an American writer: “Such a household will have influences and associations peculiar to itself. The sons will be manly and tender; the daughters will be gentle and strong; parents and



children, in their mutual affections, shall bring out the finer harmonies of human life, that show God's goodness, even more deeply than the chants of the Psalmist's choirs. As changes come, and the years pass, treasured remembrances shall fill the home with images sacred as the tablets and pictures of ancient chapels, and hopes more living than monumental marble can record in solemn churchyards, shall proclaim the resurrection and the life over the dead; and they who die of that family, wherever they close their eyes, will have in the cherished ministrations of that church in the house the mightiest of all proofs of the eternal home. The house made with hands opens into the eternal spheres, and its own life repeats Christ's assurance of heavenly mansions."

Happy the childhood that is blessed with such a home! More than for all earthly blessings, do I thank Heaven for the religious home, that gave my birth a Christian, baptismal welcome, and surrounded my earliest consciousness with the suggestions and ministries of a household piety, a domestic godliness, which, by an unconscious, unseen power, formed my open mind and heart for God and Heaven.

"The thought of those first years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction."

Thanks be to God; let us say it, Christians! ye whose early years were hallowed with religious homes. Thanks be to God for pious parents, and the Christian home of our

childhood! And as the memory of such a home still lingers in our souls with a heavenly benediction, shall we not seek to multiply the families that call upon God? With such remembrances of our early years, and with Christian solicitude for the culture of the soul in youth, we cannot but look with the deepest interest upon the domestic institution. It is one whose importance is demonstrated by the instinct which creates it, and clings to it. All through life, how those old home-memories and home-influences surround us with an almost magic power!

Beautifully illustrative of this mighty instinct, and memory of Home, are these lines of Goldsmith:—

“In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
In all my griefs — and God has given my share,  
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,  
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down:

\* \* \* \* \*

I still had hopes, my long vexations past,  
Here to return, and die at *Home*, at last.”

Yes, is the responsive feeling of every Christian heart; let me live in a Christian home, where God is honored in the family worship, and the family life; where the dearest ties of earth are hallowed by a divine love; where the sweet communions of the household are made immortal by hopes of heaven; where even the broken links in the family circle are retained by Christian faith, and help to draw us heavenward. O yes, here would we live!

And when our time comes to depart, let our last look

be upon the faces we best love; let the gates that open into the celestial city, be these well-known doors; and thus let us die at home, in a Christian Home. And, knowing no better name for that world to which we go, we look up with eyes of hope and tearful rapture, and call it "Home."

"My Father's house, my heavenly home,  
Where 'many mansions' stand,  
Prepared by hands divine, for all  
Who seek the better land."

## Chapter Second.

### THE HOLY FAMILY.

Ave Maria! Mother blest!  
To whom, caressing and caressed,  
Clings the eternal child:  
Favored beyond archangel's dream,  
When first on thee, with tenderest gleam,  
Thy newborn Saviour smiled." — KEBLE.

"The earthly loves which Christ came to consecrate bear the germs of immortal uses, and are like Mary's own emblem, the rose, which, though born in the earth, lifts its bloom and wafts its fragrance to the heavens."

IN our purpose to develope and illustrate the varied phases of home-life, it is natural to begin with the "*Holy Family*." Around no family group of sacred history has the human heart lingered with such unmingled wonder and delight.

We read in our childhood the simple story of Luke, concerning the shepherds, who, after they received the message that a Saviour was born, and listened to his birth hymn, chanted by the angels, went to Bethlehem — "*and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger*," and it lives in us a picture of beauty forever. From immemorial antiquity, that humble home-scene has



been mirrored to the soul, invested with unearthly sanctity and a halo of spiritual beauty, touching our hearts with the deepest religious emotions, and associating itself with our purest thoughts of heaven.

And we ask, what is it that thus isolates that little group from all other family scenes, and invests that humble birth-place with such immortal glory? The answer is suggested by the question. It was the immaculate child Jesus that threw around that little household such holy and undying memories. It was the birth-home of the "holy child Jesus." The only home on earth that was ever blessed with a sinless child—a child possessing all the elements of humanity without a taint of evil to mar its purity, or a shadow of sin to dim its celestial beauty. It was this that gave to that little group such undying interest, and immortalized it in Christian thought and memory as the "Holy Family."

There is another feature in this household, peculiar and distinctive. In every other home-picture, the parents are the central figures. "Their offspring, however they may afterwards eclipse them, are, in the beginning of their history, wrapped within those from whom, in their fortunes and in their character, they are developed." But in this family group, the child is the central commanding figure, and so attracts to himself the eye, and so fills the whole vision of the soul, that the parents are forgotten, and overshadowed by the glory of the child.

Indeed, the bonds of this family are peculiar, and in-

vested with hallowed and profound mysteries. Joseph is but the foster-father of the child. As he bends over that infant cradle, it is with the love of a guardian, conscious of a holy trust, which enlists the deepest affections of his manly and loving heart. "And who shall define the tie which binds this child to his Virgin Mother?" It was essential to the divine mission of Jesus, that he should possess human nature, without any moral taint or infection of its depravity. Hence, according to the Apostolic creed, based upon the sacred narrative, "He was *conceived* of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. The natural and supernatural, were co-efficient factors, in the Divine assumption of humanity. The birth of Christ was the result of a direct creative act of God, and not of the ordinary laws of human generation. Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. It was meet, that the incarnation should be a sacred mystery, around which the heart of the Christian world should linger with mingled emotions of reverence and holy joy. There is something inexpressibly touching in the thought expressed by Wordsworth, that in the Virgin Mother, were "blended and reconciled" those singular, but beautiful contrasts

"Of mother's love, and maiden purity,  
Of high and low, celestial and terrene."

What impenetrable mysteries intermingle and deepen the shadows of this picture of the Holy Family? Who is

this child of supernatural conception and birth? And why does Mary mingle with those gentle looks and maternal caresses, the devout and reverent feelings of the worshipper? The answer is found in the fact, that in this scene is revealed, "the great mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh!" The stupendous truth flashes in upon the troubled and agitated bosom—the great mystery is unveiled to the heart—this babe is the incarnate God!

"Thou wast born of woman, thou didst come,  
O Holiest! to this world of sin and gloom,  
Not in thy dread omnipotent array;

\* \* \* \* \*

But thee a soft and naked child,  
Thy mother undefiled,  
In the rude manger laid to rest  
From off her virgin breast."\*

This home-scene is peculiar, as holding in its embrace the manifested God, the central fact of all the divergent lines of human history. "All the predictions and promises of God which spanned the arch of four thousand years, terminated upon this babe of the manger. And from this new salient point, they spring forth to span with the rainbow of hope other thousands of years, terminating upon his second advent, when he shall come "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in them that believe."

What shadows of the infinite surround that infant

\* Milman's Fall of Jerusalem.



cradle! How profound the mystery that enfolds the child with Mary! How august, how beautiful! But it is only on our knees, with the eastern sages, before that rude manger, in lowliness of heart and adoring worship we can see it, or feel it, in its all-transforming power.

“Wrapp’d in his swaddling bands,  
And in his manger laid,  
The hope and glory of all lands  
Is come to the world’s aid;  
No peaceful home upon his cradle smiled,  
Guests rudely went and came, where slept the royal child.”

Millions upon millions of our race have trembled with joy and rapture before this scene of the incarnation, a mystery magnificent and thrilling. In the night of time, these voyagers, storm-driven upon the ocean of life, have looked up into the infinite depths above them, and beheld that glory-beaming star, radiant as at first when it was hymned by the angels on the plains of Bethlehem, and under its guidance have passed on, through tempest and darkness, to the haven of everlasting rest.\*

Every thing in this home-scene is unique and wonderful. The supernatural conception of the Virgin’s Son; the incarnation of the Godhead in him; and the concentration upon him of all the lines of History and Prophecy, invest it with an unearthly sanctity and grandeur. And then the supernatural and mystic ties of affiliation in the household, give a peculiar expression and coloring to this

\* Theophany, by Turnbull.



home-picture. In view of these peculiarities, and hallowed associations, it stands out in Christian thought and memory as the Holy Family.

Expansion upon any one of these features or phases of the holy family, would be interesting and profitable; but such a direction of our thoughts would not comport with the general scope and design of the present work. Our object in adverting to this sacred picture, is simply to illustrate, by the domestic relations of this family group, the true home life and spirit as grounded in religion.

We take two aspects of this home-scene; the one as it appears in Bethlehem, and the other representing Joseph with the young child and his mother, fleeing from Herod into Egypt. These two phases will suggest and illustrate the general relation of Christianity to childhood—as its friend and guardian—and the special benignity of the gospel to children, as seen in the maternal relation.

The “Flight to Egypt,” as painted by some of the old masters, presents these relations in some of their most touching and significant aspects. In the picture we see, as the central figure, a young child. On one side stands Mary, with troubled anxiety, watching beside her precious charge; on the other, in the distance, is the dark form of Herod, with rage and vengeance in his face, dooming to death the innocent babes of Bethlehem. It is an eloquent, moral picture—the emblem of a great and permanent reality. We see in this pictured flight a touching symbol of childhood and its perils, its guardian angel, and

its evil genius. Mary, with the young child nestling in her bosom, borne away from the destructive sword of Herod, is suggestive of Christianity, as the guardian of childhood against the destructive power of sin in the world, especially emblematical of that guardianship as exercised through the instrumentality of the pious mother, and the Christian home.

Herod still lives, in the varied and seductive forms of sin, and seeks the ruin of innocent and helpless childhood; and there is no protection against the destructive enemy like that of a mother's love and prayerful vigilance, especially when that mother herself is embosomed in the church of Christ, which is the mother of us all.

Let us look at these two phases of the Holy Family — first, as suggesting and illustrating the guardianship of Christianity over helpless childhood; and secondly, as a beautiful symbol or emblematic representation of that guardianship, as exercised through the instrumentality of the pious mother and Christian home.

## I.

### CHRISTIANITY THE GUARDIAN OF CHILDHOOD.

Prior to the advent of the Son of God, there was little concern for children, beyond the Jewish Church; as a class, they were neglected, and often abandoned to in-

fluences the most blighting and destructive. Paganism was cruel, and even among civilized nations there was but little deference paid to the touching and imperative claims of childhood.

But with the coming of Christ, a new era dawned on the Home-institution. When the Saviour opened his arms and welcomed little children, with a look of benignity and love, he performed an act which has hallowed children in all subsequent time. He seemed to say, by the very attitude he assumed, as well as by the words of welcome which he uttered, — “It is a part of my mission to help these little ones — I have come from heaven to be the child’s teacher and the child’s Saviour.”

Ever since, Christianity has been the guardian of childhood against the spirit and cruelty of the world.

We find beautiful tokens among the earliest confessors of Christianity, of their care for the souls of their offspring, commending them to Him who had opened the gates of everlasting life. In the Roman Catacombs, the inscriptions on the tombs of children are expressive of the tenderest parental feeling and Christian hope. “Virginus remained but a short time with us.” “Sweet Faustina, may you live in God.” “Laurence to his sweetest son, Severus, borne away by angels on the seventh Ides of January.” How different, says one, the spirit breathed in such inscriptions, from that inspired by the idolatry, that formed a god of the war-spirit, that makes



childhood desolate and orphaned, or bows down before Moloch and casts children into the fire at his feet.

Even in what are called the dark ages, the time of monkish austerity and priestly sway, we see glimpses of tender solicitude for childhood. In the Gothic Cathedral, that embodiment of the middle ages, the Holy Mother and her Divine child beam upon the worshipper from illuminated missals and painted windows. There by the altar stands the baptismal font; and the child of the poorest peasant is recognized as a lamb of the good shepherd, and received into his fold. What would childhood have been in the dark ages without the church? What other power could have stood between innocence and its tempter and destroyer? Who would have withstood Herod, if the mother heart of Christianity had withheld its guardianship?

Christianity is still the guardian of childhood, for Herod still lives. His spirit is still the spirit of the world — of the world's passions and its policy. What multiform evils are all around to blight the innocence and purity of the young! What perils surround their path! What serpents are ever gliding among the very flowers of their spring! "The child ever needs protection; Herod ever in some form rages; Christianity, like a mighty maternal heart, needs ever to keep its watch."

Let us look for a moment at the relations and mission of Christianity to



## FRIENDLESS AND HOMELESS CHILDREN.

1. Friendless children ! what visions of gloom and sadness are called up by these words ! What multitudes of these little ones are seen, at the twilight of evening, mingling in the homeward stream ! Some, go to the sanctuary of loving homes ; some, to places which it seems a mockery to call by that sweet name — where chill penury and want brood by the hearth, with gaunt misery and ghastly death. Others, retire to places that may be designated as moral tombs, where huddle the demons of drunkenness and debauchery ; where God is but a dark cloud of muttering thunder in the soul ; where childhood is baptized in infamy, and overhung with curses. Hundreds, in our large cities, are found, in their early childhood, so helpless and confiding, and yet with no maternal bosom to lean upon — no words of love, like the breath of spring, to develop their affectional nature — left to the whirl of evil and the prowling destroyer. Such children are seen in our midst, left to the action of influences that cast over the young life an abiding gloom. Children, that look sad and melancholy, with the cares of age and the forecast of evil fixed and frozen on their juvenile faces. “ A melancholy child ! what an anomaly among the harmonies of the universe ! something as incongruous as a bird drooping in a cage, or a flower in a sepulchre.

2. A few facts will serve to give a perceptible reality to the gloomy picture, and quicken our sympathy for poor and parentless children :

A gentleman passing one day through the streets of Edinburgh, saw a boy, who lived by selling fire-wood, standing with a heavy load upon his back, looking at a number of boys amusing themselves in a play-ground. "Sometimes," says the writer, "he laughed aloud, at other times he looked sad and sorrowful. Stepping up to him, I said, 'Well, my boy, you seem to enjoy the fun very much; but why don't you lay down your load of sticks?' . . . . 'I wan't thinking about the burden — I wan't thinking about the sticks, sir.' 'And may I ask what you were thinking about?' 'Oh, I was just thinking about what the good missionary said the other day. You know, sir, I don't go to church, for I have no clothes; but one of the missionaries comes every week to our stair, and holds a meeting. He was preaching to us last week, and among other things he said — "Although there are rich folks and poor folks in this world, yet we are all brothers." Now, sir, just look at these lads — every one of them has fine jackets, fine caps, with warm shoes and stockings; but I have none. So I was just thinking if those were my brothers, it doesn't look like it, sir — it doesn't look like it. See, sir, they are all flying kites, while I am flying in rags; they are running about at kick-ball and cricket, but I must climb

the long, long stairs, with a heavy load, and an empty stomach, whilst my back is like to break. It doesn't look like it, sir—it doesn't look like it.'” Or, take the following instance, which I extract from the Records of one of the Benevolent Societies of our own city: “‘Can you read or write?’ said the visitor to a poor boy. Marty hung his head. I repeated the question two or three times before he answered, and the tears dropped on his hands, as he said, despairingly, and I thought defiantly—‘No, sir, I can't read, nor write neither. God don't want me to read, sir. Indeed, so it looks likely. Didn't He take away my father since before I can remember him? And haven't I been working all the time to fetch in something to eat, and for the fire, and for clothes? I went out to pick coal when I could take a basket in my arms; and I have had no chance for school since.’” Now this, says an eloquent writer, is fallacious and dangerous reasoning; nevertheless, it *is* reasoning, and shows that the mind of the poor boy is not inactive as to the problems of life. And the intellect which is so acute in theory, will soon drive to practice. Stimulated by that selfish instinct which, as I have shown, will under pressure absorb every other consideration, he speedily commences the career of *crime*.

A gentleman in one of our cities, meeting a little boy, sad, tattered, and forlorn, with his fingers nervously clutching his old rags, said to him—“Well, my little fellow, whose child are you?” He dropped his head



for a moment, and then looking up, with tears, said — “Please, sir, I ain’t nobody’s child.” O what a sight, in such a world as this — “nobody’s child!”

We must think of these friendless children. Think of them, as abused, neglected, driven into sin — often, by the very hands that should lead them to virtue and to heaven. Think of these orphan children — or worse than orphaned by living parents, bestialized by drunkenness and other lusts, and lost to all the instincts of natural affection. Think of these little ones, cradled in reeking filth, drinking in blasphemy and obscenity under a canopy of curses, that blights all that is beautiful and hides the very face of God! And then, that the picture may touch your heart with a personal interest, imagine, fond father, that your boy were thus friendless, and abandoned to every snare of evil, and damning power of sin, with none to warn or counsel, with no home to shelter him from the cruelty of an avenging Herod! And, ye mothers, imagine that your daughter, whom the very winds must salute with courtesy, were left without a mother’s love and care, to be ensnared by the spoiler, and afterwards to walk through the streets at night, a painted desolation and a reeling shame! Your heart trembles and thrills at the bare thought or possibility of such a destiny for your child.

3. And yet we ask, are not these friendless children possessed of one common humanity — intrinsically of as costly material, and as dear to heaven, as the little ones



that gladden your hearts and brighten your homes? O yes. Take the lowest phase of humanity among these out-cast and trampled little ones — take that ignorant, squalid, and tattered child, and wash its face and look into its eye, and you see there still the image of God — a crown-jewel, in its filthy and battered casket, a precious soul, around which angels love to linger, and for which Jesus died.

4. *There is another* phase of childhood among the poor and neglected that is peculiarly touching in its appeals to our sympathy. It is where there are children, not merely in their orphanage, or in their touching sadness, exposed to temptation, want, beggary, and crime; but nobly struggling *against* the tide of evil — struggling against want, enduring and working for some one that is loved. The city missionary recounts incidents, from which might be written a Martyrology, with blood and tears, over many a gloomy threshold, on the walls of many a desolate room; a fearful record of human suffering — a sweet memorial of youthful virtue — of *children*, who are *living* martyrs. We give but one instance, from a book, which contains numerous memorials of this kind.

It is of a beggar-girl who “lives,” as the narrative goes on to say, “in a rear building where full daylight never shines — in a cellar-room where pure dry air is never breathed. A quick gentle girl of twelve years, she speaks to the visitor as he enters — ‘Mother does not see you, sir, because she’s blind.’” The mother was an old

woman of sixty-five or seventy years, with six or seven others seated around. 'But you told me you and your mother and little sister lived by yourselves.' 'Yes, sir — here it is;'" and at the end of the passage the visitor discovers a narrow place, about five feet by three. The bed was rolled up in one corner, and nearly filled the room. "'But where is your stove?' 'We have none, sir. The people in the next room are very kind to mother, and let her come in there to warm — because, you know, I get half the coal.' 'But where do you cook your food?' 'We never cook any, sir; it is already cooked. I go early in the morning to get coal and chips for the fire, and I must have two baskets of coal and wood to kindle with by noon. That's mother's half. Then when the people have eaten dinner, I go round to get the bits they leave. I can get two baskets of coal every day now; but when it gets cold, and we must have a great deal, it is hard for me to find any — there's so many poor chaps to pick it. Sometimes the *ladies* speak cross to me, and shut the door hard at me, and sometimes the *gentlemen* slap me in the face, and kick my basket, and then I come home, and mother says not to cry, for may be I'll do better to-morrow. Sometimes I get my basket almost full, and then put it by for to-morrow; and then, if next day we have enough, I take this to a poor woman next door. Sometimes I get only a few bits in my basket for all day, and may be the next day. And then I *fast*,

because, you know, mother is sick and weakly, and can't be able to fast like me.' "

This is one of the "short and simple annals of the poor." But those of whom Gray spoke rest peacefully in the "country churchyard;" their spirits are in heaven, and their history is embalmed in his own immortal Elegy. But *these* records are of those who yet live and suffer — "Martyrs *without* the palm."

And could I summon them before you, and would the Master but enter as when upon earth, surely he would look upon them in tender pity; would bless them; would take in his arms those whom the world has cast aside and overlooked. Nay, perhaps he would transfigure their actuality into their possibility, and we might see "the angels in their faces," pleading with us before the Father's throne! \*

5. Now, Christianity is the

#### FOSTER-MOTHER

of these *living*, juvenile *martyrs*, and these neglected, vagrant and friendless little ones. Her great maternal heart, yearns for these homeless children, and her hands are outstretched, through varied instrumentalities, to gather up these jewels from the very rubbish and moral wastes of social degradation. To gather them, not as soiled and trampled flowers, but flowers with something of Eden's tints and beauty still about them, and bring them

\* Chapin — Humanity in the City.



under the light of the sun of righteousness and the dews of heavenly grace, that they may revive and freshen with something of their lost loveliness; to unfold in the garden of the Lord on earth, and bloom in the Paradise of God above, forever.

What a constellation of noble, philanthropic institutions have risen upon the dark places of the neglected and suffering poor! And among these institutions, stand pre-eminently such as have special reference to orphan and homeless childhood. We point, with a feeling of spiritual exultation, to these noble monuments of Christianity, in her maternal care and solicitude, to seek out neglected children, and open to them the blessings of home and education, industry and religion.

Among these institutions, we would name, "The Mission at the Five Points," "The Children's Aid Society," "The *Asylum* for Friendless Boys," "The Home for Friendless Children;" institutions originated and sustained by Christian benevolence; institutions which show the practical operation of Christianity—first of all in the hearts of Christians, and then flowing out in action. Institutions, whose practical working is after the *method* of Jesus, which consisted not of mere teaching, but of *help*—which touched not only the issues of the sin-sick soul, but the wants and sufferings of the body.

"How striking is the fact, that the freshest and noblest charities of this nineteenth century, are only developments



of the manner in which the *Redeemer* soothed the sorrows and vanquished the evils of the world!"

We point with peculiar pleasure in this connection, to "*The Orphans' Farm School*," and "*The Orphan's Home*," of the Lutheran Church, as special illustrations of the Divine method of benevolence\* towards friendless children. I refer to the method, which, while it seeks pre-eminently the spiritual good, does not overlook the wants of the body—which aiming supremely at results for eternity, does not exclude the temporal. These institutions aim at the highest good of the orphan and neglected children, for the present and the future. "A system of help which gives something more than spiritual instruction on the one hand, something more than mere food and clothing on the other; which combines measures of relief and nourishment for the demands of our whole nature in the form of the ignorant and suffering child; and which, better than all, lifts him out of the humiliating condition of a mere pauper or dependent, and sets him in a channel of manly exertion, self-development, and self-support; which not only does the negative work of removing a mass of evil from society, but makes for it the positive contribution of an improved and educated humanity."

It is in this way, Christianity exercises her fostering

\* These institutions were conceived and established by the Rev. W. A. Passavant, of Pittsburg. The Orphans' Farm School is located in the vicinity of Pittsburg. The Orphan's Home is in that city. Both are in successful operation, under the superintendence of the benevolent and indefatigable founder.

care and guardianship over friendless children. These institutions are the outstretched arms of Christianity, to gather the parentless and neglected children to her bosom, to be nurtured there, and sheltered from the persecuting sword of Herod. And as such, they have a practical claim upon the sympathy and co-operation of every Christian and philanthropist. And we may all, in some way, assist in this good work, either by personal labors or contributions of our goods and money. We do not pretend to designate the specific form of our co-operation. Each knows what he can best do—what is his special, Providential *call* in the matter; but let him be assured that he *has* a call; and that this spectacle of orphan, suffering, imperilled childhood, is something, not merely to touch our sympathies, but to engage our prompt, personal, and self-denying endeavours. It is not with tears and sympathy alone, that we are to answer the poor woman's prayer—a prayer that echoes through so many anxious and sorrowing hearts—"May the Lord spare my Archy from the bad boys, and from taking to the ways of his father."

O if these neglected children could present themselves before us, how would they plead for help! The very hand that has smitten them consecrates them to Christian charity. Think of these children, in their helplessness, sad and neglected, exposed to the destroyer! Think of your own early days, with all their tender associations of home, brothers, sisters, fathers, and more than all,

of her who stood to you in Mary's place, and blessed you with a Christian mother's love ! And as your heart warms with these sacred memories, help to give to these outcast little ones a home, and what may be to them the best substitute for a mother's care and nurture. Think of Him who put his hands upon little children, and blessed them, and who said — "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

"Though I depart, the poor remain ;  
Kindness to them, is love to me !"

The second phase of the picture illustrates the special benignity of the gospel to childhood, as exhibited in the sacred relation of the mother to the child.

## II.

### MARY; OR, THE TRUE IDEAL OF A CHRISTIAN MOTHER.

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child, with Mary, his mother."

"His throne, thy bosom blest,  
O Mother undefiled ;  
That throne, if aught beneath the skies,  
Beseems the sinless child." — KEBLE.

There is no scene in sacred history invested with such religious interest as the one before us. It stands pre-



eminent in the memory and affections of the world, surrounded with an air of sanctity and a halo of spiritual beauty, touching our hearts with the deepest religious emotions, and associating itself with our purest thoughts of heaven.

The extravagant and blasphemous homage paid to Mary by Romanists, has, unconsciously, repelled the Protestant mind from that veneration due to Mary, alike for her personal piety and loveliness and her honored position as the Mother of Jesus. . . . There is much beauty in the Catholic conception of the blessed Virgin. Some of the sweetest effusions of their devotional poetry are chanted in her praise, whilst art has been consecrated to set forth the Holy Mother in celestial beauty and angelic loveliness. To the primitive disciples, it was natural the very name of Mary should mingle with their holiest memories of earth, and inspire them with a reverence for a moral loveliness now in heaven. This sentiment, sobered and modified by our Protestant faith, still lingers among us with our religion and our homes.

Whilst we repudiate the priestly dogma, which inspheres Mary in heaven above all saints and angels, we are not insensible to the beautiful feeling and sentiment involved in the dogma. As we look upon our homes, adorned with the graces of woman, and beautified with the innocence of childhood, we may exclaim, "Hail, Mary!" in the Gospel sense. We can say, "Blessed art thou *among* women," — *among* them, not *above* them; among them, to



illustrate the true mission of woman ; among them, as the representative of our highest IDEAL of the CHRISTIAN MOTHER.

There is but occasional reference in the gospel history to Mary's life and work. From her vigil beside the manger to her tearful agony before the cross, we have only a few glimpses of the mother, in her deep devotion and tenderness, mingled with Christian faith and heroic fortitude, watching, with alternations of hope and fear, the gradual development of that mysterious life, whose infant-weakness was intrusted to her care.

We have in one or two historical incidents, a vivid picture of this Christian mother.

1. *Her faith in God.* When Gabriel accosted her with, "Hail, thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women," she is calm and self-possessed, and though troubled, makes no response, but "casts in her mind" the import of this startling salutation. "This single ray of historic light daguerreotypes her character before us, with imperishable distinctness; what habits of patient meditation and inward self-communion does this perfect self-control reveal?"

When the angel unfolded the import of the salutation, that she should bring forth a son, and should call his name Jesus, &c., we see her faith.

It was something, in all its details of unprecedented strangeness. It involved contingencies and implications, from which her maidenly delicacy might have recoiled.

It involved a succession of miracles ; but as it was all referred by the angel to the veracity and almightiness of God, her confiding heart bowed in humble acquiescence, with the simple response, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word." What childlike simplicity and faith ! All seeming difficulties, all conceived contradictions to facts and antecedents, vanish at a simple reference to the purposes of God, with whom nothing shall be impossible. It was this faith in God that gave such calm equanimity, such depth of character to Mary. It was this living faith in the providence and covenant of God that gave such womanly dignity and vigor, yet delicacy of sentiment, to her character. Mary, says one, is a beautiful example of the piety which breathed and burned in the ancient Hebrew Church, when the faith of God's people fed upon the promise of a coming Messiah.

There is scarcely, in the whole range of the Bible, a more beautiful instance of faith, humility, and meekness. Take into account the several circumstances to which we have hastily adverted, and there are not in the Bible words more expressive of thorough acquiescence, of unfeigned submission, and of unqualified confidence. Ask me to point out a saint, displaying extraordinary faith, and that too under circumstances the most adapted to perplex ; and considering the sex, the age, the condition — I would rather direct you to Mary expecting the son Jesus, than to Abraham offering up his son Isaac. There was far less of apparent effort of the one than of the other — there is

not in the Virgin the courage and the fortitude which you mark in the Patriarch — nevertheless, when you come to examine all the circumstances of the two — what the two were — what they had to believe — what they had to endure — we think you will hardly question the accuracy of the decision that in the secrecy of the Virgin's chamber there was a yet more signal moral triumph, than on the summit of Moriah, when the father's hand was lifted up to slay the child of promise.\*

2. In her interview with Elizabeth, in her mountain home, we have a beautiful development of her deep religious emotions and enthusiasm. That sweet canticle, that joyous outgushing of her heart, reveals the deep springs of feeling and piety that welled up in her soul. What enthusiasm of grateful exultation, when greeted by her cousin Elizabeth :

“My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit doth rejoice in God, my Saviour,  
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden :  
For behold ! from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

“Where,” says an eloquent writer, “among those favored with education or gifted with genius, shall we find a better interpreter of womanhood, in its mission from God, than that trusting Hebrew in her filial faith and unwavering devotion? . . . Her soul attuned to devotion by the Psalms of her great ancestor, David, and

\* Melville.



inflamed with hope by the visions of prophets, and schooled to patient charity by the choicest examples of the mothers in Israel, she stands at the centre of Providential history, receiving from the former ages their mantle of honor, and transmitting it to the new ages enriched with a divine grace destined to brighten with time."

3. Another feature in Mary, worthy of special notice, was her intense maternal feelings, her exquisite tenderness and affection as a mother—the mother of Jesus. This feeling, in some degree, is an irrepressible instinct of nature. But in Mary, it was so intensified and directed by religious faith, that it becomes something sacred and heavenly, and she stands before us in sacred history as the impersonation of our highest ideal of a Christian mother. That gifted genius, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, thus pictures Mary's feelings, as she watches beside her sleeping child:

"Sleep, sleep, mine Holy One.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am not proud — meek angels, put ye on  
 New meekness, to hear such utterance rest  
 On mortal lips, 'I am not proud' — *not proud!*  
 Albeit in my flesh God sent his Son,  
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed,  
 As others bow before Him, still my heart  
 Bows lower than their knees! As centuries  
 That roll, in visions, your futurities  
 My grave athwart!  
 Whose mumurs seem to reach me while I keep  
 Watch o'er this sleep!



Say of me as the Heavenly said, 'Thou art  
The blessedest of women!' blessedest,  
Not holiest, not noblest; no high name,  
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,  
When I sit meek in heaven!

For me, for me —

I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,  
Among the lonely hills of Galilee,  
Whose summits looked heaven-laden!  
Listening to silentness, that seemed to be  
God's voice — so soft, yet strong — so fain to press  
Upon my heart, as Heaven did on the height,  
And waken up its shadows by a light,  
And show its vileness by a holiness;  
Then I knelt down, as silent as the night,  
Too self-renounced for fears;  
Raising my small face to the boundless blue,  
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears!  
God heard *them* falling often — with his dew."

As illustrations of her deep maternal feelings and solicitude, see Mary beside Joseph, fleeing from the bloody sword of Herod, through the desert sands, trembling, with her precious treasure folded to her bosom, bearing it away to Egypt, from the impending storm — see her, as she finds her child in the temple, among the doctors, after days of anxious search and painful suspense. Her deep feelings of solicitude gush forth in the gentle remonstrance — "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing?"

See her again before the cross of her son. "The sword," which Simeon predicted, "pierces through her soul."

A Grecian artist, who sought to represent the grief of Agamemnon at the death of his daughter, Iphigenia, gained the praises of all antiquity, by simply drawing a veil over the face of the agonized parent. Thus has sacred history veiled the grief of Mary at the cross. Let no sacrilegious hand attempt to lift that veil from the sorrowing mother. That mother bowed before the cross with a crushing sorrow, and yet, with a mother's love and bereavement, were doubtless mingled the deep devotion of the Christian, who beholds in the meek sufferer, her Saviour and Lord, as well as her son.

The following eloquent passage from an English writer expresses, as we conceive, the true moral attitude of Mary, in her claims to the affectionate veneration of the Christian world.

“A Papist may offer extravagant and blasphemous homage to the Virgin—we will not join in such—we would as soon render it to Moses, to Abraham, and Paul, or to any of the worthies who signalized their faith, and bequeathed such a rich legacy to the church. The Roman Catholics hold, that Mary was free from all sin, thus making her own birth as mysterious as that of her Son,—whereas we hold, that in nothing was Mary distinguished from other women, but in superior sanctity and stronger faith. But if we cannot go with the Papist, we can yet honour the Virgin; we can single her out of a throng of those, whose history might put to shame our deteriorated piety, and hold her up as worthy of a chief place in our

esteem. Beautiful meekness and lively faith command the admiration of the disciples of Christ. It might have been expected that the individual selected for the rare honor of giving birth to the Messiah would exhibit all those graces which are of chief worth. Such expectation is abundantly answered, by the account, brief as it is, of the annunciation of the Virgin. There is no record of Scripture from which we may gather fuller indications of the character of all which is most noble in intrepidity, blended with all that is most graceful in humility; in which the firmness of the martyr is combined with the timidity of the recluse; the boldness which can brave the frowns of the world, with the sensitiveness which can shun a smile — the faith that counts nothing impossible with God, with the gentleness which cannot meet the slightest difficulty, except it has strength imparted.” \*

It is in this attitude we would view Mary — not as an object of idolatrous homage, but as a saint of pre-eminent moral beauty, and specially as the mother of Jesus. And it is in these historic glimpses of Mary — her childlike trust in God, her serene and heavenly piety, flowing from habits of self-communion and spiritual introspection, combined with a pure and sanctified maternal feeling, watching with holy devotion the Christ-child — it is in these potential, yet beautiful elements of religious character, that we present Mary, as the true ideal of a Christian mother.

In humble imitation of Mary, the light of her home,

\* Melville.



the guardian of her Holy Child, is opened up the noblest sphere of woman. Here, by an influence genial, but mighty, may the mothers of Israel act upon the social problems of our times, and execute, by all gentle and confiding graces, and spiritual loveliness, their holy mission to the church and the world.

Let us linger for a moment upon this most sacred and touching relation of the household —

#### THE MOTHER AND THE CHILD.

There are few hearts so incrustated by wordliness or indurated by sin, as to feel no gentle thrill responsive to these words, so dear to memory, so bright to hope.

Mother! the sweetest name to memory — symbol of the Divine tenderness; inspiring us with a love that we never blush to confess, and a veneration deep and permanent as life. How the nameless tokens of that earliest love weave themselves through all the brightness, through all the darkness, of our after life! Is there anything earthly so potential in its moulding and formative power upon the unfolding child, as a sanctified mother's love? Thousands who have been strong in trials and temptations, and pure amidst the seductions of sin, can trace back the sacred virtue of that hour, to some sweet memory of childhood, some calm moment, when they knelt beside a mother, and from gentle looks of love and simple words of prayer, they first learned piety at home.



And the other word *child*!—childhood and children! Is there a parent who has not in some way felt the power of these words, touching “the finer issues” of his being? Have not many of us felt our first great sorrow, and the breaking up of the spiritual deep within us by the couch of a dying child! Claspings the little cold hand, we have understood as never before the reality of death, and through the gloom that gathered over the infant cradle, caught sudden glimpses of the heavenly home. Surely in some way we have all received a benediction from these little ones.

The general relations of the child to the household have been considered in the preceding chapter: we desire now to direct attention to the more special and influential relation of the mother to the child.

#### THE MATERNAL RELATION.

This topic has been discussed so often and so thoroughly, that it has been well-nigh exhausted; and there is little left, either of novelty or importance, to justify more than a brief allusion to the practical suggestions of the subject.

1. The importance of this relation is at once obvious, from the fact, that the mother presides at the fountain of being, and gives direction to those first ideas, first emotions, and first unfolding of the faculties, which in their full development, are sufficient to bless or curse a world. It is for her, with her quick maternal intuitions,

to detect the ideal human being that is enfolded in the infant, and then to bring it out, and finally to invest it with positive life.

It is according to the order of nature, that the power to love should be developed before the power to think. All things with us begin with a feeling — which gradually enlarges to an idea — and then takes the form of action. And hence the early awakening of the affections is more important than mental training.

It is a sad thing to want in childhood, maternal endearments and caresses. And it has been justly remarked, that the cheeks which affection does not touch, which no mother kisses, have always a sad look that nothing can conceal. It is more fatal to neglect the heart than the head.

Now the mother wakens earliest in the child the sentiment of love. Her bosom is its first paradise. Her embrace first unlocks the heart and opens its mysterious depths. To her is given its first smile. Her tones lull it to repose, and mingle with its dreams—with its being. The mother's love with its gentle and countless ministrations, wakens a responsive love in the child. And this early bond of love is rarely if ever broken. In the wanderings of after-years — wanderings, it may be, in the dark ways of sin, this tie clings around his spirit, drawing him back to the memories of childhood. Through years of sin, it may be, he sees that face of tenderness and love, which bent over the

cradle of childhood, and thoughts of his mother touch the hardened prodigal to tears.

There is a touching illustration of the power of maternal love, in that case of a mother and her idiot child, with which many of you may be familiar. He was the son of a poor widow in the north of England. Utterly helpless and dependent, "he did not appear to be alive to anger or self-defence." But there was one ray left to guide him, one ligament of life to which he clung. He trusted in the love of his mother. This was his consolation and his safeguard — to this he looked in all his perplexity and fear. "His whole occupation as he sat upon the ground, was in swinging backwards and forwards," singing, "in a low, pathetic voice," an unmeaning strain. Thus day by day he sung his strange ditty, and clung to his mother's presence, living on, vacant of thought, aimless in action. "One day," says the narrator, "the poor woman and her idiot boy were missed from the market-place, and the charity of some of the neighbors induced them to visit her hovel. They found her dead on her sorry couch, and the boy sitting beside her, holding her hands, swinging, and singing his pitiful lay more sorrowfully than ever he had done before. He could not speak, but only utter a brutish gabble. Sometimes, however, he looked as if he comprehended something of what was said." But he knew that he had met with a loss; for "when the neighbors spoke to him, he looked up with a tear in his eye, clasped the cold hand more tenderly, and sung in a softer



and sadder key.” “‘Poor wretch!’ said they, ‘what shall we do with him?’ At that moment he resumed his chant, and lifting two handfuls of dust from the floor, sprinkled it over his head, and broke with a wild, clear, heart-piercing pathos,” into his monotonous and mournful song!

The only ray of light that lingered in that dark and chastic mind, was a mother’s love. What a holy trust is that of mothers! What a kingly power their love, to touch and control the springs of the new-born mind!

2. *From this fact, we at once see*, how absolute the mother’s power over the mind and heart of the child. She possesses the true power to *educate* her child, to draw out all the powers of his nature and unfold them in harmony. “She penetrates into his very soul, and moves it to her guidance by a beautiful law of attraction. There grows up imperceptibly beneath her moulding sympathy a spiritual and everlasting fabric. Her precepts do not lie in his mind like extraneous facts; he has imbibed them like nutriment, and they have become assimilated with his whole character. Thus she does a work which mere intellectual or didactic instruction cannot accomplish, because she has the assistance of the affections—she weaves the warp of truth into the woof of love.”

This fact is in itself sufficient to show the potential influence of the maternal relation. The mother watches by the earliest springs of thought, and moulds their channels, and wields their courses—she wakens earliest in the child the sentiment of love, and thus moulds the



heart and gives direction to the first budding of the immortal mind. It is this peculiarity in the maternal relation, that invests the mother with a power and responsibility which transcend all human estimate. She comes in contact with the infant spirit, when most plastic and ductile, before its nebulous thoughts and opening affections and veering will, have crystallized into character; and, hence her influence is inextricably interwoven with its destiny. In this view it has been justly said, that the mother fore-ordains the destiny of her child. Almost any number of facts might be adduced, confirmative of this aspect of maternal influence: but a few quotations must suffice.

The celebrated Cuvier, "from the extreme feebleness of his childhood, came almost constantly under the care of his mother. The sweetness of this intercourse dwelt upon his memory throughout his whole life." She fostered in him that ardent desire for knowledge which was so strong a trait in his character. The same fact has made as familiar and glorious as the history of her son, the name of "Martha, the mother of Washington." "Out of sixty-nine monarchs who have worn the crown of France," says M. Martin, "only three have loved the people; and, remarkable circumstance, all three were brought up by their mothers." "I shall never forget," said Kant, speaking of his mother, "that it is she who caused to fructify the good which is in my soul." "The

future destiny of a child," said he who has been called the Man of Destiny, "is always the work of its mother."

That we may realize the true import of this influence, and the momentous responsibility which it involves, let us turn for a moment from the mother to

#### THE CHILD.

"Mother! learn rightly to estimate the priceless value of a little child. For in that estimate, will be awakened a consciousness of responsibility."

There is on the brow of infancy the seal of immortality, which should inspire us with something higher than respect, something holier than parental admiration. An artist once said, he could never paint the face of a child, for it reminded him so much of heaven.

Augustine said, "Adam, though one, was all men." In him, says one commenting upon this sentiment of Augustine, was seminally contained the history of the world. So, in the little child, seminally exist the elements of the adult man; it is the folio of a man in a single letter. And children are the budding of the world's harvest, the fountain of her issues, the stepping-stone of her edifice.

Do not look upon your children merely as flowers, blossoms, dewdrops. "Flowers! they are the flowers of the invisible world, indestructible, self-perpetuating flowers. *Blossoms!* they are the blossoms of another world, whose fruitage is angels and archangels. Or dewdrops! they are dewdrops that have their source, not on earth, to be

exhaled by a flash of sunshine, but among the everlasting fountains of mercy and love."

Just think what a child is — this being thus fresh from the unknown realm, a bud enfolding the boundless possibilities of humanity — and you cannot fail to recognize the intrinsic claims of that little child. It has an immortal destiny. You see the first gleam of intelligence in its infantile face, which will shine when the sun is dark. You see in that little body an undying spirit, susceptible of unlimited expansion, a subject of God's moral kingdom, a creature on probation for the destiny of hell or heaven, a being destined to unmeasured heights of glory, or unfathomed depths of wretchedness and despair!

Mother, it is from you that child receives the first touch, the first secret impulse, in the line of its moral, stupendous destiny! You hold it at first in your arms, a mere passive thing, and it opens into conscious life, under your soul, streaming into its ears and eyes. A little further on, and you begin to stir its little heart with the sentiment of love, your smile is reflected from its sunny face, and your own love is echoed back from its beating heart. Then, there is the dawn of conscious intelligence, and the moulding and formative process is fairly begun. Your words find a soil in its impressible nature; your example will be reflected in its life, and your very life is going down perpetually into the child. How solemn and responsible is the trust committed to your care!

The *mother* is to unfold that priceless germ, and guide



that infant immortal in the way to Jesus and to heaven.  
How solemn and responsible the trust! How fraught  
with everlasting issues! Seek for wisdom from above.  
Pray

“God! who gavest  
Into my guiding hand this wanderer,  
To lead her through a world whose darkling paths  
I tread with steps so faltering, leave not me  
To bring her to the gates of Heaven alone.”

To illustrate this point, we will take you to Hebron,  
among the hills of Judea, and introduce you into another

#### HOME-SCENE.

“Childhood shows the man,  
As morning shows the day.” — MILTON.

“What manner of child shall this be?”

There is a light and joy in the home of Zachariah and Elizabeth, unknown and unfelt before. What a rapturous joy gushes up within those aged parents, as they fold to their bosom their first-born child! Their fondest hopes are fulfilled in the advent of that little child, like a flower in winter, to cheer them with its late and delicate beauty. The shadows of life's evening had been slowly darkening the walls of their home, but now they smiled with an unwonted light; and the stillness which had settled over them, was broken by the sweet sounds of childhood.

When the people heard of all the wonders that surrounded the infant John, they exclaimed: “What manner

of child shall this be?" How the question must have thrilled the hearts of the parents! They had some general idea of his great mission, but much of the future was veiled from their vision. Elizabeth knew not that the gentle form which she cradled in her arms, would one day lie in a dark and loathsome dungeon; that the beautiful head that pressed her bosom would be severed from its body, and brought all ghastly into the festive hall of princely revelry. Such a revelation of the future would have shaded the visions of that joyous mother.

And who, as a parent, can look upon the little one, without this question spontaneously rising up in the mind, "What manner of child shall this be?" In that frail and delicate form is enfolded the germ of an immortal mind. And how vivid the sense of responsibility that on us, as parents, to a great degree, will depend the destiny of that child! Can the mother, with all the gushing tenderness of a new-born joy, as her quickened thoughts go out from that infant cradle, to roam through eternity, be otherwise than conscious of a responsibility she never felt before?

"I have wept  
With gladness, at the gift of this fair child!  
But, oh God!  
Thou know'st how heavily my heart at times  
Bears its sweet burden."

How thrilling the thought, that the young spirit, which clings to her so confidingly, shall receive from her so many elements of its weal or woe! That, in an important sense,

she foreordains the destiny of the child. Mother, put back the hair from the brow of that bright-faced boy! That countenance, as yet undisturbed by cares of guilt, is serene as heaven. How does your heart yearn with love, as you breathe upon it the benedictions of God! In time, he will go forth to grapple with the world, and his spirit will be tried in the solemn issues of life. Can you think that ever those features will become bloated, those eyes grow fiendish with dark and ungoverned passion? That those lips, now wreathed with beauty, shall breathe the fumes of drunkenness, and that sweet and musical voice shall break out in oaths and blasphemies? With such possibilities, what indefinable solitudes tremble in the parent's heart, with the question, "What manner of child shall this be?"

Remember how much of that child's destiny lies within your control! O, ponder your solemn charge! Earth has no greater trust than what is devolved upon you, in the education of that little child.

Do you ask, what shall I do? Just what Zachariah and Elizabeth did: bring up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Instil God's truth into its opening mind, by a holy example and believing prayer; live into it a divine life, and commit it to the guardian care and saving power of Jesus, the good shepherd.



## APPEAL TO MOTHERS.

With these aspects of the maternal relations, its formative and controlling influence, and its momentous responsibility, we turn again to the picture as in the beginning of this chapter, and ask all mothers to behold Mary, watching beside the holy child. Mary, with that child in her bosom, bearing it away from the destructive sword of Herod—from the storm that was gathering over the infant cradles of Bethlehem.

Herod still rages. His spirit is still the spirit of the world—of the world's passions and its policy. The child still needs protection and guardianship. It is still imperilled by sin, and its multiform snares and temptations; and who, if not the mother, shall watch over it, and shield it from the destroyer.

But for this sacred office, you need the piety of Mary—her faith in God—her deep devotion and holy enthusiasm,—that like her you may keep your watch of love, and then Herod will wait in vain to destroy.

## OUR COUNTRY.

In a critical period of the French history, Napoleon said to Madame Campan, "The old systems of education are worth nothing. What is wanted for the proper training of young persons in France?" With emphasis, she replied, "*Mothers!*"

What is most needed in the present history of our nation? *Mothers!* Our country wants virtuous citizens, and honest, magnanimous, God-fearing statesmen and rulers. The churches want ministers and missionaries, with a Christ-like spirit, and a Paul-like zeal. And, they must come from Christian homes, where mothers, like Mary, keep watch. O, ye mothers! could ye lift up the veil, and catch a glimpse of the momentous Future, and realize that in the secrecy of home, you are determining, through your children, what that future shall be, your soul would be fired with a patriotism, which would lay the child upon the altar of his country, and a Christian devotion that would make him an offering on the altar of his God. Yes; to mothers, God has committed, in a measure, the destiny of the world.

And when we reflect that in this land there are *three million of mothers*, with *three hundred thousand* infants, to be moulded by a mother's plastic hand and quenchless love — the prayer rises spontaneously from our trembling heart to heaven, that God would bless the homes and mothers of our land. For herein lies the great element of power and of hope for our country. The church and home must go together, and unite our nation under the empire of Christ, as under the empire of civil law. And it is a matter of hope, as we look out over this vast country, that the church and home are advancing together from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore. The farmer of Oregon, the miner of California, are not to be beyond the pale of

Christian civilization. Even they shall hear the chimes that tell of the nativity of the Saviour—they shall find in their homes, rude cabins though they may be, pleasant faces, whose womanly grace and childish confidence shall reveal a light kindled of old by the Blessed Mother, and nurtured for ever by her Holy Child.

#### THE MOTHER'S REWARD.

The appeal is made to every mother, with a personal emphasis, and the promise of special results.

Richly that Christ-child repaid his mother's watching. And so will every child thus nurtured, repay the pious mother, for her vigils of love, teachings of wisdom and prayers of faith.

The permanency of early impressions, indicate both the responsibility and hopefulness of your work.

#### CHATEAUBRIAND AND HIS MOTHER.

The conversion of this great French author is a striking illustration of the maternal power and mission. We give the account of his recall to duty, from a wild and reckless career of folly, in his own graceful and touching language:

“My mother, after having been thrown, at seventy-two years of age, into a dungeon where she was an eye-witness of the destruction of some of her children, expired at last upon a pallet, to which her misfortunes had reduced her.



The remembrance of my errors diffused great bitterness over her last days. In her dying moments, she charged one of my sisters to call me back to that religion in which I had been brought up. My sister, faithful to the solemn trust, communicated to me the last request of my mother. When her letter reached me, beyond the seas, far distant from my native country, my sister was no more — she had died in consequence of the rigors of her imprisonment. These two voices issuing from the tomb — this death, which seemed as the interpreter of death, struck me with irresistible force, and I became a Christian. *I did not, I allow, yield to great supernatural illuminations, but my conviction of the truth of Christianity sprung from the heart. I wept, and I believed.*"

Take another illustration.

"When I was a little child," said a good old man, "my mother used to bid me kneel down beside her, and place her hand upon my head, while she prayed. Ere I was old enough to know her worth, she died, and I was left too much to my own guidance. Like others, I was inclined to evil passions, but often felt myself checked, and, as it were, drawn back by a soft hand upon my head. When a young man, I travelled in foreign lands, and was exposed to many temptations; but when I would have yielded, *that same hand was upon my head*, and I was saved. I seemed to feel its pressure as in the days of my happy infancy, and sometimes there came with it a voice in my

heart, a voice that must be obeyed,—‘O, do not this wickedness, my son, nor sin against God.’”

Through all changes of place and time, those early impressions remained uneffaced from the memory of the heart—

“In foreign lands I travelled wide,  
My pulse was bounding high,  
Vice spread her meshes by my side,  
And pleasure lured my eye:—

Yet still *that hand*, so soft and cold,  
Maintained its mystic sway,  
As when, amid my curls of gold,  
With gentle force it lay.

And with it breathed a voice of care,  
As from the lowly sod,  
“My son—my only one—beware!  
Nor sin against thy God.”

Ye think, perchance, that age hath stole  
My kindly warmth away,  
And dimmed the tablet of the soul;—  
Yet when, with lordly sway,

This brow the plumed helm displayed,  
That guides the warrior throng,  
Or beauty’s thrilling fingers strayed  
These many locks among,—

That hallowed touch was ne’er forgot!—  
And now, though time hath set  
His frosty seal upon my lot,  
These temples feel it yet.

There are thousands whose childhood was blessed with such a mother’s love and pious care, who can repeat from

their very hearts and hopes, the touching sentiment of the last verse:—

And if I e'er in heaven appear,  
A mother's holy prayer,  
A mother's hand, and gentle tear,  
That pointed to a Savior dear,  
Have led the wanderer there.

We look upon this relation of the mother to the child almost with awe. What a holy charge is theirs! With what a queenly power their love can rule the fountain of the new-born mind! Mothers! be faithful to this holy, this momentous trust. Like Mary, look to God for grace and wisdom to fulfil your mission. He who heard the prayer of Hagar in the wilderness, will listen to your earnest cries for help. He who guided the destinies of her child, will watch and conduct yours. You may not lead out an Ishmael upon the scene of life. You may not rear a Washington, or leave your name —

“Wrought out in marble, with a nation's tears  
Of deathless gratitude; yet may you raise  
A monument above the stars; a soul  
Led by your teachings and your prayers to God.”

There is a picture, which, in some points, illustrates your position. “It is of a mother, who, with her infant child, has fallen from the deck of a vessel, at sea. The wild waves dash around her, and exhaust her strength. Yet still she clings to her infant, and holds him up, above the hungry billows, shouting—‘Save my child!’ The



waves grow wilder ; thick mists swim before her eyes ; the sea now flings her close to the ship, now madly dashes her back. Still, not of herself she thinks, but of him whom she holds aloft, crying—‘ Save my child ! ’ And lo ! from that vessel a strong arm is reached down, and they are saved. Mother ! amid the sweeping temptations of life, in the vortex of the world, bear up in the arms of love, and with the prayer of faith, that child of thine, and a Redeeming Hand shall be reached down from heaven.”

And O, the reward of a faithful Christian mother on earth and in heaven ! Taken up to dwell together before the throne of God and the Lamb, that child of prayer and faith will sparkle there as a pearl-drop in your crown of life and glory !

## DEATH-SCENE.

There was a shaded chamber,  
A silent, watching band,  
On a low couch, a suffering child,  
Who grasped the mother’s hand.

She had told her faith in Jesus,  
Her simple prayer was said,  
And now, that darkened vale she trod,  
Which leadeth to the dead.

Red fever scorched her bosom,  
Frost chilled the vital flame,  
And her sweet, meek brow was troubled,  
As anguish smote her frame.

Yet, ’mid the gasp and struggle,  
With shuddering lips, she cried,  
“ Oh, mother — dearest mother,  
Bury me by your side.”

Look! look! the thin lip quivers,  
The blue eyes open wide,  
And what a soft, low, whisper steals,—  
*“Bury me by your side.”*

And did the spirit falter  
Upon its upward track,  
To strew this never-dying flower  
In tender token back?

Even at the gate of Heaven,  
Whence songs of angels flow,  
Remembered it the cradle hymn  
That soothed its infant woe?

*Oh, mother's love!* thus strong to lure  
A seraph from on high;  
Be faithful to thy trust—and bear  
Thy nurslings to the sky.

## Chapter Third.

### CANA; OR, THE BRIDAL-SCENE.

“There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee . . . . and both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage.”—JOHN.

“Marriage is a figure and an earnest of holier things unseen,  
And reverence well becometh the symbol of dignity and glory.”  
TUPPER.

THIS bridal-scene in Cana of Galilee lives in Christian memory, as the only marriage on sacred record at which Jesus was present. Among the thousands of nuptial scenes that have taken place—often amid the most imposing pageantry of royal grandeur—this *one*, in a sequestered hamlet of Palestine, stands out pre-eminent in history, as consecrated by the presence of Christ. His presence at the Cana festival was a reconsecration of this memorial of Paradise. It was a recognition of marriage as the normal relation of social life—the basis of the domestic constitution—a relation instituted by God, and sanctified by Christ.

This home-scene at Cana suggests and illustrates this fundamental moral relation in its Christian aspects. For though the relation itself is coeval with humanity, it has degenerated, under the influence of sin; and Christianity alone restores it to its primeval harmony and significance,



investing it with a holy dignity — an almost sacramental character.

In the discussion of this normal relation of the home-life, we shall advert to the original institution in Paradise, its design and object, and then, passing on to this nuptial scene at Cana, seek to unfold its obvious suggestions of the influence of Christianity upon this institution. How it has restored and ennobled the marriage relation, making it, as in Eden, a bond of sweet and sacred unity, invested with immortal affections and eternal sanctions!

#### EARTH'S FIRST BRIDAL.

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help-meet for him.” — MOSES.

“To be man's tender mate was woman born,  
And in obeying nature, she best serves  
The purposes of Heaven.” — SCHILLER.

Man had just come from the creative hands, in the perfection of humanity, with his noble form and majestic brow, and soul enstamped with the moral image of God, clothed with honor and glory. Around that first man was the beauty of Eden; the very air was laden with the fragrance of flowers, and the song of birds. But he was alone. There was no human face into which he could look, and see the reflection of his own — there was no heart to beat responsive to his new-born joys; no human being to whom he could whisper the grateful wonder of his soul,

and say, "How beautiful is this our home, how good our Father who made it thus!"

Adam was not complete without Eve. There was a vague feeling of want, as if he were but half a man, an undefined consciousness that something was wanting to consummate his blessedness—

"In vain the viewless seraph lingering there,  
At starry midnight, charmed the silent air;  
In vain the wild bird carolled on the steep,  
To hail the sun, slow wheeling from the deep.  
Still slowly passed the melancholy day,  
And still the stranger wist not where to stray;  
The world was sad—the garden was a wild,  
And man the hermit sighed, till woman smiled."

"It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him an help-meet for him."

"And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

Why the Almighty adopted this particular process in the creation of woman, we are not told. A young lady once asked a distinguished surgeon, "Why woman was made from the rib of man, in preference to any other bone?" He gave the following gallant answer: "She was not taken from the head of man, lest she should rule over him; nor from his feet, lest he should trample upon her; but she was taken from his side, that she might be

his equal; from under his arm, that he might protect her; from near his heart, that he might love and cherish her."

The particular method of woman's creation had a mystical meaning, symbolical of the marriage relation—"She shall be called woman (*manness*), because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

Thus, what seems to the sneering caviller a childish fable, is to the thoughtful student a beautiful symbol of marriage, and of the true relation of the sexes to each other.

We have no account of the personal appearance of our primeval mother; but we know that she was the *outwrought divine ideal of a perfect woman*. A true artist's ideal of female form and expression is beautiful, as we see it developed in the Venus of Titian, and the Greek Slave of Powers. Eve existed as a thought, an ideal, in the divine mind before she was made. And how glorious must have been the embodiment of God's ideal of woman! With what ecstatic wonder the first man must have gazed on the first woman, radiant with transcendent loveliness, who was to be his companion, his bosom-friend, his wife!

Milton's description of Eve, we believe to be as true as it is beautiful:

"Her heavenly form  
 Angelic, but more soft and feminine  
 Her graceful innocence. . . . .  
 Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,  
 In every gesture dignity and love."



Equally true is his representation of Adam, in the first ecstatic outburst of his feelings, exclaiming—

“O, fairest of creation, *last* and *best*  
Of all God’s works.”

In this record of Moses, we have the divine origin of marriage; “we see the first human pair united in marriage bonds—*earth’s first bridal.*”

Thus divine in its origin, and beautiful in its associations, is the marriage institution. We trace its credentials to this Mosaic record of the first human pair. Its affecting ceremonial was the crowning act of creation. Its officiating High Priest was God himself. The altar was some fragrant bower, amid the primeval Paradise. Attending angels were the witnesses; and the first epithalamium was the song of the morning stars. No other institution can boast of a higher or holier inauguration, or show such an antiquity. The records of it are the first syllables of written history, and the faintest stammerings of tradition. The first breathing of its spirit was the simplicity of the happy pair in Eden, in their first and sinless love. It began while the earliest beams of the world’s twilight were shooting up into a sky, with nameless stars, and dawning over an unpeopled world.

This primeval and divine ordination of marriage, as recorded by Moses, was recognised and endorsed by Jesus, the great Teacher, who declared it to be an appointment

of God, forecast in the plan of creation, and founded therefore in the constitution of nature.

“Have ye not read (saith our Lord)\* that He who made them [man and wife] at the beginning, made them [a] male and [a] female; [as intending to prevent both polygamy and divorce] and said [as the formal authentication of the great law of marriage already inserted in the constitution of human nature], For this cause [or, on account of entering into the married state] shall a man leave his father and mother [the nearest relation he had previously sustained], and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore, they are no more twain, but one flesh.” A union this so intimate, that every other is to yield to it; so sacred, that the Divine proclamation concerning it is, “What God hath joined together let no man put asunder;” so indissoluble, that nothing is to separate it but that which separates the soul from the body; so spiritual in its ultimate relations and aims, as to find its antitype only in that divine union which, as the fruit of redemption, is to survive every other, and to attain its consummation in heaven.†

This primeval law of marriage, asserted by Moses, and recognised by Christ, is a great and beautiful law of nature. “It is that principle of duality which runs through the universe, dividing every perfect whole into

\* Matthew, xix. 4-6, referring to Genesis, ii. 24.

† Patriarchy, by John Harris, D.D., p. 87.

two parts, assigning to each its own necessary work, and rendering this very diversity essential to harmony. It is the duality of day and night, of the leaf and the flower, of the hand and the heart. By virtue of this law, humanity is two-fold, and is perfect only in the man and the woman; each of these having a peculiar sphere."

This duality—in the original institution of marriage—is a divine protest against polygamy—which is utterly subversive of the great and beneficent ends of the domestic economy, and destructive of all social organization. This primeval enactment of monogamy is further confirmed by the providential fact, of the substantial equality of the numbers of both sexes born in all countries, and amidst every diversity of circumstances. It is manifestly the divine idea, as Paul expresses it, that "every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband." And all history shows, that an infringement of this law, has ever been disastrous to the dearest interests of society. So that there is a beautiful harmony, between the will of God expressed in the constitution of nature, and the appointment of the marriage institution.

The *moral reasons* for this appointment of the marriage relation, are distinctly asserted by the prophet Malachi (chap. ii. 14, 15). In one of his bold remonstrances against the sins of his times, he exclaims, "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; yet is she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant. And did



he not make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might *seek a godly seed?*” Here the last of the Old Testament prophets plainly asserts that God laid the foundation of the marriage institution in the original creation of a single pair, and affirms that the beneficent design of the arrangement was the advancement of virtue and religion by means of the domestic economy.

The same truth was expressed in the beautiful old chant of the Jewish Temple-service, and has been echoed by the church in some form ever since; “God setteth the solitary in families.”

It must be obvious at once, that without the institution of marriage, the family could have had no existence—and consequently there could have been no domestic ties, no kindred affinities, no social order and affections, no civilization, and no progress.

“Marriage,” says Jeremy Taylor, “is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms and fills cities and churches and heaven itself. Celibate, like the fly in the heart of an apple, dwells in a perpetual sweetness, but sits alone, and is confined and dies in singularity; but marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house, and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labors, and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good things to

which God hath designed the present constitution of the world."

We present the following eloquent passage from Dr. Hague, incorporating a quotation from Robert Hall, both illustrating in a forcible manner, the aspect of marriage, now under consideration.

"Where is the man, gifted with ordinary means of information, who has not seen that, wheresoever the sanctions of the marriage institution are disregarded, home life has no permanent attractions; that the private virtues of every class are deprived of all genial aliment; that there domestic education cannot exist, and the evil passions of childhood are left to luxuriate in fearful wildness; that there the kindly affections of our nature are often blasted in the bud; that habits of industry and of self-control are never formed; and the moral dignity of woman — that great conservative element of the social state — can scarcely be named but to awaken the ruthless spirit of mockery and satire? Entirely truthful to nature and to history are the words of Robert Hall, in his celebrated discourse on Modern Infidelity: "Marriage institutions are the great civilizers of the world, and essential to the welfare of mankind. They are sources of tenderness as well as guardians of peace. Without the permanent union of sexes there can be no permanent union of families; the dissolution of nuptial ties involves the dissolution of domestic society. But domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the

first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together; and were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would be dissolved." What a signal realization of this truth was presented to the gaze of all mankind by the most refined country of Europe, during that "Reign of Terror" which covered the whole realm with a pall of funereal gloom! Although the French Revolution sprang, by a natural law of reäction, from the atrocities of that kingly and priestly despotism that had preceded it, nevertheless, it became a raging whirlwind, which the Genius of Infidelity could not rule; and when we pore over the horrors of that stormy time, when our hearts sicken in view of that chaotic ruin into which France was plunged, let us remember that this state of things was heralded by the granting of twenty thousand divorces in the city of Paris in a single year, and celebrated by the public adoration of a beautiful, but vile and shameless woman, who was enthroned as the "Goddess of Reason," and borne through the streets in a splendid chariot, amid the honors of a grand triumphal procession. Facts like these have a terrible significance, showing, as they do, to what an extent the moral sentiment had become corrupted throughout all classes of a cultivated community, and showing, too, that wheresoever the marriage institution — the chief support of domestic virtue — becomes subverted, the state itself will reel from its position, and involve all the interests of society in its overthrow.



With this aspect of marriage, its divine ordination, its multiform bearings upon all the springs of social life and religious culture and advancement, we are not surprised to find such frequent testimonials in the Scriptures, to the dignity and inviolable sanctity of this relation. We do not wonder that the Bible in its spirit and penal enactments, so guards the married relation, and shields the home-circle — making the family pre-eminent among the chosen instrumentalities for the accomplishment of the divine purposes of mercy to our fallen world.

Without the domestic constitution and the household nurture and influence, what would become of childhood, in its guileless innocence and helplessness? What of those home-restraints and bonds, clasping the great social circle? “Relax and sever the household bond; melt this golden chain, and scatter it on the broad and undefined surface of a loose and licentious socialism; and where are the hopes, either of the church or the world?”

Let us resist every tendency to disparage the sacredness of the marriage relation, to release the bonds of domestic life, or to impair our sense, not only of their divine authority, but of their important influential relation to social organization, and the very existence of the church, in all her manifold blessings.

Let us cherish these sacred institutions—“The God of love has made choice of the domestic relations as the depositories of his grace, and there laid the deep founda-

tions of that spiritual temple, from which the symbol of his presence and glory is never more to depart."

"Thou art the nurse of virtue. In thine arms  
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,  
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again."

#### MARRIAGE IN CANA.

"And Jesus was called to the marriage." — JOHN.

"It is well that Jesus was at that feast. The ages since have remembered his presence, and his sacred name, heard still at the marriage, deepens its memory and consecrates its joy."

"There are smiles and tears in that gathering band,  
Where the heart is pledged with the trembling hand.  
What trying thoughts in the bosom swell,  
As the bride bids parents and home farewell!  
Kneel down by the side of the tearful fair,  
And strengthen the perilous hour with prayer."

There is something beautiful and significant in the fact, that the Saviour began his miracles at a wedding, rather than at the grave of Lazarus, or the gate of Nain. In a life so brief, yet wondrous, every step of which seemed to be pre-determined, and taken, for the illustration of his great mission of love, this commencement of his public ministry at a marriage, was not accidental.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory."

Apart from all that is local and temporary, this miracle, says Trench, may be taken as the sign and symbol of all which Christ is evermore doing in the world, ennobling all

that he touches, making saints out of sinners, angels out of men, and in the end heaven out of earth, a new paradise of God out of the old wilderness of the world.\*

“We need not wonder to find the Lord of life at that festival; for he came to sanctify all life—its times of joy, as its times of sorrow: and all experience tells us, that it is times of gladness, such as this was now, which especially need such a sanctifying power, such a presence of the Lord. In times of sorrow, the sense of God’s presence comes more naturally out: in these it is in danger to be forgotten. He was there, and by his presence there struck the key-note to the whole future tenor of his ministry. He should not be as another Baptist, to withdraw himself from the common paths of men, a preacher in the wilderness: but his should be a harder and a higher task, to mingle with and purify the common life of men, to witness for and bring out the glory which was hidden in its every relation. And it is not, perhaps, without its significance, that this should have been especially a *marriage*, which he adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle.”†

In this home-scene, Christ assumes an attitude of benignity towards the family relation, and his first miracle, as it has been said, dawned in the form of a nuptial benediction upon a young couple beginning their conjugal life. This institution, among the most delightful reminiscences of Paradise, received a reconsecration at this

\* Trench.

† Ibid.



joyous festival. It was a beautiful inauguration of his public ministry, in its social aspects.

The Saviour meets the human race, whom he came to bless, first of all at a nuptial ceremony, and gave the first manifestation of his glory amidst its innocent festivities. The miracle, apart from its immediate object, was a symbolic representation of the great spiritual process by which he would transform what is earthly into the spiritual — what is human into the divine. And how natural he should begin his work at a wedding, and that the first outgleaming of his divine glory should hallow a bridal festivity! It was a formal consecration of the union that founds the family — the very basis of society, and all existing organizations. It was, moreover, a practical rebuke of the asceticism that scorns the social affections, “and would make of life a ghostly austerity, just as if man were heavenly by being unearthly.” The posture of Christ at this nuptial scene is indicative of the very genius and spirit of his mission, in its relations to social life. He came not to destroy, but to save. He came not as the communist, to disorganize the social elements; nor as the gloomy ascetic, to frown upon the innocent joys of life. But to consecrate the domestic constitution; for in the bosom of this primal union lay the germ of the great genealogical tree of the human race. To infuse a spirit of purity into the hidden recesses of social existence, and thus to sanctify the very heart of society; to hallow human life, and sweeten human joy, by commingling with all life that

richest ingredient of human happiness, a sense of God's approving love, a consciousness of the divine benediction ; so that we may realize at home and abroad, and everywhere, that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace.

With these Christian aspects of marriage, founded in Eden, and consecrated anew at Cana, we take this nuptial home-scene as suggestive of the following topics, embracing everything essential to a practical view of the whole subject, viz:—*The Preliminaries of Marriage—the Ceremonial*—and *the Wedded Home-life*.

## I.

## STEPS TO THE MARRIAGE ALTAR.

“ Youth longeth for a kindred spirit, and yearneth for a heart, that  
can commune with his own ;

He meditateth night and day, doting on the image of his fancy.”

TUPPER.

Few events of life enfold such germs of good or evil, for time and eternity, as marriage. There is no personal act, save one, more solemn, or which more deeply involves human happiness and destiny. And yet it is obvious, from the current tone of conversation on this topic, and the accustomed frivolity with which it is viewed, that the serious aspect of the subject is rarely considered. How sportively and inconsiderately, often, are its relations assumed ! from what varied impulses of passion or selfishness, or even from some whim of fancy ! Sometimes, from

mercenary motives, when the best heart-affections are bartered for gold. Sometimes for show and pageantry, when pride is joined to vanity, and the lips utter vows of affection and fidelity, which the heart can never ratify. Sometimes from a mere sentimental love, that is as transient as youth, and superficial as beauty. Who does not know, that hundreds assume this most sacred relation of life from motives thus sordid and frivolous? And yet those pledges are coined into imperishable vows. They bind, not for a passing companionship, but for the solemn issues of life. Not merely for the sunshine of the nuptial festivity, but for life — for long years, it may be, of shadow and storm — seasons of trial and adversities, and the unknown alternations of the future — until death breaks the tie that “man may not put asunder.”

It is obvious, that whatever may be the prevalent inconsiderateness upon this subject, there is no act of life which the young should contemplate with more calm and prayerful consideration than marriage. A union which involves the whole future of earthly life — imparting to it the purest joy, or imposing a lasting sorrow, from which there is no refuge but the grave — yea, affecting in many cases the destiny of the soul *beyond* the grave, reflecting its light or projecting its shadow along the boundless future — should be seriously considered.

Let those who are contemplating such a union, look well and devoutly to the steps which conduct to the marriage altar. “A pernicious sentimentalism has gar-



nished the vestibule of marriage with flowers, and thrown it open in a vista of amber light." Let them, therefore, look forward to this union with the clear vision of a thoughtful mind, and ask for direction from above, for, "a prudent wife is from the Lord,"—and, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord."

Let there be a calm, deliberative view of this union, and the object of your choice, before the reason is swayed and the heart becomes delirious with passionate attachment. It is then too late for consideration. Passion is strong in a youthful heart; it is often delirious—mad! It blinds the judgment, bewilders the imagination, and captivates the reason. Before the heart is enthralled by some selected object, is the time for the exercise of a dispassionate judgment. And much of the infelicity in the wedded life is attributable to precipitancy and a want of considerateness, before assuming the duties of this sacred relation. "Alas! many an enamored pair have courted in poetry, and after marriage lived in prose."

Ponder well the momentous import of this life-relation. And with a view of giving direction to your thoughts, allow me to offer some suggestions, both *precautionary* and *advisory*.

And our first suggestions are precautionary and relate to

## YOUTHFUL LOVE AND COURTSHIP.

“There is a fragrant blossom that maketh glad the garden of the heart.” . . . . .

What strange and indefinable emotions thrill the heart, in the first glow and consciousness of youthful love! How it flushes the whole future with its golden light; and, however that light may be tinged and refracted by earthly exhalations, it gradually and insensibly forms itself into an aureola around some elect countenance which guides to the choice for life.

We forbear an elaborate analysis of this ecstatic feeling, lest we should be betrayed into mere sentimentalism on the one hand, or metaphysical abstraction on the other.

It is a sentiment more than filial or parental love, more than brotherhood, more than the holiest friendship—a love for which we have no adequate expression, which at once fascinates by natural affinities and controls our whole being as with the sanctity and power of religion. But if it eludes all analysis and baffles all forms of expression, it is a sentiment which has thrilled in every heart that deserves the name, and is therefore known by universal experience; and thus, what is too subtle for words, is adequately defined in our consciousness. For,

“In joyous youth, what soul hath never known,  
Thought, feeling, taste, harmonious to its own?  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Who hath not own’d, with rapture-smitten frame,  
The power of grace, the magic of a name?”

Yes, all have felt, or now feel, this ecstasy of early love — “this sweet idolatry, enslaving all the soul.”

From the very novelty of this feeling, as it first glows in the youthful mind, bewildering the other faculties, as well as from romantic notions derived from works of fiction, there is great danger of taking the initial steps to the altar from mere spontaneity, or the impulse of youthful passion.

Our first suggestion upon this delicate point, is one of *precaution*.

1. Beware of entertaining false notions of this early love, or mere ideal dreams of married life.

“Take heed that what charmeth thee is real, nor springeth of thine imagination;

And suffer not trifles to win thy love; for a wife is thine unto death.”

Many of the young indulge in the most nonsensical notions concerning love. Their ideas, derived from the current fiction, or from their own prurient fancies, lead them to discard reason and deliberation, as having nothing to do in love affairs. It is all a matter of fancy, and sentimentalism, and spontaneity — in which judgment must be abjured, and with which parental counsel, and even a mother's tears, must not interfere. These ideas are romantic and fallacious, and often precipitate the subjects into a union of utter wretchedness, from which there is no refuge but the grave. Be assured, that pure affection is founded upon esteem, and is therefore under the control



of reason. It is not a mere sentiment, or ideality, much less frenzy of passion, the meanness of desire —

“For *Love* is no more such, than seraphs’ hymns are discord;  
And such is no more love, than Etna’s breath is summer.”

And to follow the blind impulse of passion is to be lured, by the winning song of the syren, into a dream-land of folly; and to awake from the delirious dream, only to mourn, disconsolate, amid the ruin of your perished hopes. Listen not to the voice of passion. Heed the suggestions of your reason. Keep the precious love of your young heart, until you find an object worthy of it; and if no such object be found, then let it remain in your own heart, reserved for heaven alone.

“In passion’s flame  
Hearts melt, but melt like ice, soon harder froze.  
True love strikes root in reason.”

2. Equally fallacious are the *expectations* of marriage derived from flippant conversation, sentimental tales, and youthful fancies. Those whose ideas are formed in such schools, look to the married life through a rose-colored atmosphere. In the vision of their youthful fancy, it seems like a bright May-day of unclouded felicity, where the golden years dance in bridal hours.

“Thus, in the desert’s dreary waste,  
By magic power produced in haste,  
As old romances say,  
Castles and groves, and music sweet,  
The senses of the trav’ler cheat,  
And stop him in his way.

But while he gazes with surprise,  
The charm dissolves, the vision dies:  
'Twas but enchanted ground."

Thus with time dissolve these ideal visions of marriage, like the airy fabric of the fancy, and leave the youthful dreamer to bitter disappointment, and years of lingering dullness and infelicity.

This leads me to offer some suggestions—

#### ADVISORY.

"Seek a good wife of thy God, for she is the best gift of his providence."

Learn first of all to view marriage in the sober aspect of duty, with a mind wisely forecasting its contingencies, and a heart consecrated to all its obligations. And let the thought, that the prospective union is for life, check the ardor of youthful impulse, and sober as well as chasten the wild dreams of the fancy. Let it be viewed as comprehending the whole future, and affecting by a necessary implication, every phase of earthly happiness. And let every initiatory step be taken in the calm light of reason, and under the guidance and sanctions of religion.

"Marriage should in every instance be formed upon the basis of mutual attachment."

Rightly viewed, it is not merely a union of persons, but of kindred minds and hearts. Its physical aspects, however essential, derive their sanctity from the spiritual affinity existing between the parties. So that the relation

assumed without this mutual affection is defilement and sin, and must end in mutual repulsion.

1. Let those, therefore, who contemplate this union, be certified that they are prompted by genuine affection. Let there be no taint in this affection, — no mercenary traffic in the sanctuary of the heart, more sacred than the temple-courts. Sad, indeed, will be the experience of those who play the Judas, and barter their hearts for pieces of silver.

“Such marriage unions as calculating parents sometimes plan from mercenary motives, have been the bane and curse of many a family for successive generations. The springs of social life are poisoned by the moral malaria that hangs murkily around the abodes of those who are the victims of such heartless schemes. For, although equality of rank, fortune, and position, may have its advantages, these are all lighter than the small dust of the balance when weighed against those qualities of *character* which form the basis of a real and permanent union.”\*

Beware also, of forming an attachment simply on the ground of physical beauty. This would be falling in love with a doll or a picture. We cannot be wholly indifferent to the charms of personal beauty. Nor ought we to be unaffected by external attractions. For if there be any thing in the exterior which excites repulsion, the banns are interdicted by the voice of nature.

\* Dr. Hague.



“Affect not to despise beauty; no one is freed from its dominion:  
But regard it not as a pearl of price;—it is fleeting as the bow  
in the clouds.”

True beauty is something more than a pretty face, elegance of form, or grace of manners. It has not only a form but a spirit—a beauty we must know, to appreciate—a beauty which gleams from a thoughtful mind, and a pure and loving heart; and which bespeaks for the owner a *soul*. This will impart beauty to the homeliest face. It was the valorous soul of the swarthy Moor, that captivated the gentle and confiding Desdemona; who apologized for her love, by saying:—

“I saw Othello’s *visage* in his *mind*.”

This beauty of mind and heart, never fades—“possessing charms beyond the fascinating Egyptian, for which Antony paid the bauble of the world—a beauty like the rising of his own Italian suns, always enchanting, never the same.”

True affection can be permanent, only, when inspired by the enduring elements of moral beauty—and an attachment thus formed is likely to survive the charms of novelty, and the spoliating touch of time. Whereas an attachment, based merely on exterior grace of form and beauty, is little more than fancy or passion’s fine phrenzy, and will soon pass away, leaving the unhappy victims to a wedded life, without affectional unity;—leaving them to the bitter experience, that they have taken a gaudy but scentless flower to their bosom, with no spiritual fragrance to gladden the heart or beautify the home.

2. Let me urge with *emphasis*, that *true-love* is fundamental to the marriage relation. If the parties anticipating such a union, are not conscious of a pure, intense, mutual attachment, then, for them, "it is not good to marry."

Without this natural affinity — this mutual love — it is a perilous experiment to assume the marriage vow. For nothing can be more tormenting than to be held in repulsive contiguity by a legal bond, where there is no affectional sympathy — subject to a forced companionship, and the constant collision of characters that have no mutual adjustment.

There are many prudential considerations that are not to be overlooked, such as relate to a reasonable prospect of competency, an approximate similarity in tastes, rank, and age; but first of all, be assured that you truly love the object to whom you are about to pledge your heart and hand. Be careful, that you are prompted, not by a mere sentimental fancy, or the blindness of passion, but by genuine affection: an affection begun in friendship. For friendship and love must unite to form a happy married union; and by friendship we mean an affection arising from pure sympathy of spirit. True affection begins in esteem, founded on certain moral excellencies in the person; this esteem warms into genial and kindred friendship, which finally culminates into love. Thus, "friendship founded in natural, unforced sympathy, and growing by the waters of immortality, becomes the central

support, around which, as around a rod of heaven's gold, the flowers and fruits of earth's purest affection, gather in graceful clusters.

Be assured that nothing can compensate for the want of this natural affinity, this genial love in wedded life. You may have a home of palatial grandeur, adorned with artistic beauty, and surrounded with the loveliest of natural scenery — but without love all will be but a dreary waste, a burnished misery, a grievous mockery, and in the utter desperation of your wedded and life-long misery, your sad heart will be heard to sigh, “Is it for these glittering baubles I have bartered away my heart, myself, my earthly happiness?” But alas, for this folly and its consequent wretchedness, there is no remedy and no refuge but the grave. By all the instinctive recoil of your nature from such a prospect, and by all the yearnings of the heart for genial sympathy and a happy home, peaceful in the sunlight of affection, do not enter the married state unless drawn by the solicitations of a pure and virtuous love — a love that will foster the tender sensibilities of the heart, and secure a companionship that becomes more beautiful as the dreams of youth pass away; a companionship made genial by prosperity and strengthened by suffering; a companionship that will sweeten the coarsest fare, and cheer the humblest home—suffusing life's evening twilight with the joy that gladdened the bridal morn.

3. Finally, do not exclude religious considerations in forming this most sacred compact. A Christian should



marry "only in the Lord." Both reason and Scripture protest against the union of a believer with an unbeliever. For, "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" No considerate person should hazard a union where there is a want of affinity and sympathy, upon a point so vital and rudimental to the very existence of the household. How can such a union meet the great moral reason assigned in the Bible for the marriage relation, viz:—"That he might seek a godly seed!" How can the great work of home education be conducted with success, and the children be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, without religious unity and co-operation on the part of the parents?

The injunction to "marry only in the Lord," is not merely advisory, but a statutory provision, and binds the conscience with all the obligations and sanctions of a divine law. For a Christian, then, to marry an unbeliever, is a direct violation of the law of God. How can a Christian invoke the divine blessing upon such a union? And how can believers peril their happiness in this world, and their salvation in the next, by associating with themselves, in the nearest of all earthly relations, those who, in place of facilitating their progress in the divine life, must, to say the least, trammel their religious efforts, and obstruct their heaven-ward course. With all solemnity and earnestness, would we urge upon Christians to "marry only in the Lord."

“Let her be a child of God, that she bring with her a blessing to thy house—

A blessing above riches, and leading contentment in its train ;  
Let her be an heir of heaven ; so shall she help thee on thy way :  
For those who are one in faith, fight double-handed against evil.”

The following poetical picture from Pollok, is a beautiful representation of youthful love in its purity and intensity, seeking heaven's guidance and benediction : —

Such was the night, so lovely, still, serene,  
When, by a hermit thorn that on the hill  
Had seen a hundred flowery ages pass  
A damsel kneeled to offer up her prayer,  
Her prayer nightly offered, nightly heard.  
This ancient thorn had been the meeting place  
Of love, before his country's voice had called  
The ardent youth to fields of honor far  
Beyond the wave: and hither now repaired,  
Nightly, the maid, by God's all-seeing eye  
Seen only, while she sought this boon alone,  
“Her lover's safety, and his quick return.”  
In holy, humble attitude she kneeled,  
And to her bosom, fair as moonbeam, pressed  
One hand, the other lifted up to heaven.  
Her eye, upturned, bright as the star of morn,  
As violet meek, excessive ardor streamed,  
Wafting away her earnest heart to God.  
Her voice, scarce uttered, soft as Zephyr sighs  
On morning lily's cheek, though soft and low,  
Yet heard in heaven, heard at the merey-seat.  
A tear-drop wandered on her lovely face;  
It was a tear of faith and holy fear,  
Pure as the drops that hang at dawning-time,  
On yonder willows by the stream of life.

On her the Moon looked steadfastly; the Stars,  
That circle nightly round the eternal Throne,  
Glanced down, well pleased; and Everlasting Love  
Gave gracious audience to her prayer sincere.

Oh, had her lover seen her thus alone,  
Thus holy, wrestling thus, and all for him!  
Nor did he not: for oft-times Providence,  
With unexpected joy the fervent prayer  
Of faith surprised. Returned from long delay,  
With glory crowned of righteous actions won,  
The sacred thorn, to memory dear, first sought  
The youth, and found it at the happy hour,  
Just when the damsel kneeled herself to pray.  
Wrapped in devotion, pleading with her God,  
She saw him not, heard not his foot approach.  
All holy images seemed too impure  
To emblem her he saw. A seraph kneeled,  
Beseeching for his ward, before the Throne,  
Seemed fittest, pleased him best. Sweet was the thought!  
But sweeter still the kind remembrance came,  
That she was flesh and blood, formed for himself,  
The plighted partner of his future life.  
And as they met, embraced, and sat, embowered,  
In woody chambers of the starry night,  
Spirits of love about them ministered,  
And God, approving, blessed the holy joy!



## II.

## THE BRIDAL CEREMONIAL.

“Joy, serious and sublime,  
Such as doth nerve the energies of prayer,  
Should swell the bosom, when a maiden’s hand  
Filled with life’s dewy flowerets, girdeth on  
That harness which the ministry of death  
Alone unlooseth, but whose fearful power  
May stamp the sentence of Eternity.”

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

“It is not possible for the hearts of husband and wife to blend permanently on any lower level than the altar of God.”

MOUNTFORD.

This is usually, as it ought to be, a time of joy and social congratulation. It is the jubilee of the affections, the consummation of fondest hopes, the crowning of the pledged union with the seal and sanctity of religion. As at Cana, Jesus should be an invited guest at every wedding; that his presence may hallow and beautify the matrimonial vow — chasten and sanctify connubial love. “It is the worst clandestine marriage,” said old Thomas Fuller, “when God is not invited to it; wherefore, beforehand beg his gracious assistance.” Marriage is not merely a civil contract, but a divine institution, and should be ratified by religious as well as legal sanctions. It may be legal to be married by a magistrate, but such a marriage is without the divine seal, and lacks, in our view, the most sacred ratification. As a spiritual, a divine ordinance — “the symbol of dignity and glory” — the sacred union should

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be consummated by the ceremonial and sanction of religion, and consecrated by prayer.

“Let the day of hopes fulfilled be blest by many prayers . . .  
And at eventide kneel ye together, that your joy be not unhallowed.”

In no act of human life should one more earnestly seek the guidance and blessing of God. Never should the duty — with the promise, “Commit thy way unto Him, and He will direct thy paths” — be more intensely realized than at the marriage altar. In no transaction should we more earnestly solicit the Saviour’s presence and blessing, than when consummating a union which so deeply affects the whole life. What responsibilities, what thrilling destinies, are crowded in that moment, which sets the inviolable seal of heaven upon the pledged union, and makes it one for life! O when, if not then, should we invoke the presence of Jesus! Where, if not at that altar, should hearts tremulous with emotions of undefined hopes and fears, look, but to Him whose glory dawned in a nuptial benediction upon the married couple in Cana!

This bridal-scene encourages you to invite the Saviour to your marriage. Make Him one of your guests. Do not consummate a transaction so momentous without making Christ your Friend and Counsellor. Send to Him by special prayer, and, with your selected and future companion, say to Him, “If *Thy presence* go not with us, carry us not up hence.”

And be assured, if earnestly solicited, the Saviour will

come, as of old to Cana, and by His presence beautify and bless your bridal hour. It was his special interest in the marriage institution that directed his footsteps to that sequestered hamlet in Galilee. His presence at that humble wedding, and the outflashing of His divine glory in the miracle, were designed to honor and consecrate the union which founds the family, and is instrumentally connected with every social and moral good.

He, who, as Creator, gave a companion to man in Paradise, and ordained the marriage relation, renewed its consecration by his presence and miracle at Cana of Galilee. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and therefore, feels the same interest in your marriage; and if invited, will be present, not personally as at Cana, but spiritually and influentially, to hallow your union, sanctify your joy, and leave his benediction upon your hearts — to perpetuate the love, and fulfil the hopes of your bridal-day. And,

“Angels that are round you shall be glad, those loving ministers of  
mercy,

And the richest blessings of your God, shall be poured on his  
favoured children.”

### III.

#### THE NEW HOME.

“O happy lot, and hallowed, even as the joy of angels,  
Where the golden chain of godliness is entwined with the roses of  
love.”

If it was important to have Jesus at the wedding, it is equally so to retain his presence in the newly-formed



home. Those who sought his blessing at the marriage-altar, should seek to extend the benediction to the young household. Without the presence of the Saviour, no family can maintain the true conjugal life, viewed in its original constitution — grounded in the favor of God, “embracing all the members of the family in its expanding circle, and furnishing an exhaustless spring of joy, in the unselfish aspirations of each for the other, towards the Source of all happiness. Even the ardor of youthful love, that gives the marriage-pledge, cannot retain its beauty, its purity, or its power, unless it is ever relumed and vivified, by Him who is the light and life of the world. The faith of heart in heart will languish and die without faith in God.

Among the very first things to be done in the beginning of your domestic life, is to erect the altar of prayer, and together invoke the presence and blessing of Jesus, to consecrate your new home.

“Bride and bridegroom, pilgrims of life, henceforth to travel together,  
In this the beginning of your journey, neglect not the favor of heaven.”

As the family altar and other phases of the religious home will be considered in another chapter, we shall now advert merely to the relative duties and ruling sentiment of the conjugal life.

The Christian idea of the conjugal relation is that given by Paul, (Ephes. v. 22–33,) in his representation of

the union, as a type or symbol of the intimate and endearing relation subsisting between Christ and his Church. This gives to the relation a peculiar honor and sanctity — investing it with something of a sacramental mystery and significance: —

“*Wives*, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church;

“*Husbands*, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.”

In this comprehensive analogy, we have both the nature of the relation and the mutual duties which it imposes. The husband is the head of the wife, her lord and ruler. The wife is subordinated to the husband, as the Church to the Lord. But in her case it is not a servile, irresponsible subordination. The duty of mutual love, precludes all abuse and degradation of such a relation of headship and corresponding subordination. It will preclude all unreasonable or despotic exactions on the one hand — and every feeling of servility and conscious inferiority on the other. In accordance with this relation, the Apostle, in the conclusion of the chapter, gives a comprehensive summary of the relative duties of the conjugal union.

“Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

1. The marriage union is fundamentally one of Love. And only by mutual love can there be any fulfilment of

its obligations. Though love, for obvious reasons, is especially enjoined on the husband, it belongs equally to the wife. For, unless it be mutual, as already suggested, there can be no conjugal happiness. Assuming that the parties were prompted by love in the formation of their wedded union, every thing should be done to deepen and confirm the affection which first breathed in the words of their espousals, and then uttered the imperishable vows at the altar.

Where the marriage is one of affection, the most critical period is in the beginning of the wedded life. "The mutual affection," says Dr. Spring, "of a young married pair, if not seriously disturbed in the earlier years of its existence, is not often disturbed when that affection is matured by time, and cemented by the same habits and interests."

It is therefore, of the utmost moment, in these earlier years, to guard against every thing that might disturb the delicate harmony and finely-toned sympathies of wedded love, and by every suitable means to foster the youthful attachment, until it is matured and consolidated, and they can walk together through earth's sunshine and storm, loved and loving one another.

#### WEDDED LOVE.

There is more or less of romance and sentimentalism in all youthful affection. To their joyous vision the future seems an Elysian land, through which they will always



walk amid flowers, or repose in bowers of peace, and listen to the music of the birds of paradise. This is a natural and it may be an innocent illusion. And yet the future will come to most with overshadowing clouds, with stern trials, and multiform cares, and common-place duties. And then, as the youthful dreamers waken to the realities of married life, and discover that the angel of their youthful love, though beautiful, is a fallen angel, and the paradise of their early dreams is paradise lost; they will go out from their ideal Eden, into the realities of life, with something of the sadness of the primeval pair, as described by Milton:—

“Some natural tears they dropp’d, but wiped them soon.  
They hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.”

But if there be true affection, it will not only survive this disappointment of early hopes, but acquire greater depth and intensity by the vanishing away of all that was merely ideal and fanciful. And the very trials of life, by awakening their sympathies, and prompting to mutual kindness and ministries of love, will purify and strengthen the clasping bonds of affection, and, “in one fate

Their heart, their fortune, and their being blend.”

We need hardly say, that in a union so intimate and life-long, revealing every phase of character and mood of temper, there will be need of this sanctified love, which is “not easily provoked, which suffereth long, and is kind”

— which has power to invest the being loved with its own beauty, transforming blemishes into imaginary virtues. As the great Dramatist has it —

“My love doth so approve him,  
That even his stubbornness, his checks, and frowns,  
Have grace and favor in them.”

This love, purified and hallowed by religion, is the very life of marriage — the very bond of perfectness. It is the fragrant blossom, that will not only gladden the heart, but beautify the humblest home, with peace and harmony, and manifold ministries of kindness and charity.

“Lasting and knowing not change, it walketh with truth and sincerity.”

2. If this mutual love be cherished and maintained, all the other duties of the home-life will flow from it naturally and necessarily as the healthy tree puts forth the blossoms and fruits of summer.

And without entering into specialities, we comprehend the whole range of conjugal duties in the one word, Love — “See that ye love one another, with a pure heart fervently.” And to this end, cultivate mutual confidence and forbearance in all the relations and duties of the household. Be careful to maintain mutual good temper. Some one says, there are moods in matrimony, as well as in grammar; and the spirit of these moods is essentially connected with the happiness or misery of domestic life. Many overlook this. They do not consider how temper enters into daily life — how it permeates the whole household constitution —

that it is in our homes and around our hearths — that it gives sweetness to the dinner of herbs, or turns the most sumptuous fare into the food of misery — that it gives peace and happiness to the peasant's home, or turns palatial grandeur into a gilded mockery.

When any of the variant moods of evil temper prevail in the household, they are destructive of peace and happiness. If there is violent temper, passionate, self-willed, intolerant; or the morose, revealing itself in haughty contempt, or in cold and silent indifference; or the revengeful, proud, sensitive, always generating anti-social and cruel dispositions; or the discontented, which nothing can please, and nothing satisfy, ever petulant and querulous; or the capricious, fickle, and lawless, at one moment melting with pity and the next flushing with anger; — it is obvious that any one of these moods of evil temper, prevailing in the social relations, must disturb the peace and harmony of home.

“Better,” says Solomon, “is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.” Ah! yes, there is many a home where there is but little more than a dinner of herbs, which, genial and loving hearts, sweet and gentle dispositions, convert into more than a royal palace. And many a gorgeous mansion, that is only a glittering ice-cavern of fretfulness and discontent; halls of jangling discord, and the constant clashing of evil tempers, whilst a chill of mutual distrust and severance breathes through the sumptuous apartments, and a heartless show



presides, like a robed skeleton, at the feast. Nowhere as in the family should we so guard against evil tempers, and seek, by divine grace, to heed the admonition of the apostle — “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” For as has been justly said, there is no happiness in life, there is no misery, like that growing out of the dispositions which consecrate or desecrate a home.

3. Intimately associated with the affection and unity of the household, is attention to *little things*.

“For slender joys, often repeated, fall as sunshine on the heart,  
And the deepest wretchedness of life is continuance of petty pains.”

The social mechanism is most delicately attuned, and a word, a breath, or look, may jar the finely-toned sensibilities, and render discordant the music of home. Indeed, domestic broils and contentions, mostly originate in mere peccadillos. This seems to be the idea of Solomon, when he says, “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.” This caution is specially important in the beginning of wedded life, for reasons already mentioned.

Says Jeremy Taylor, “Man and wife are equally concerned to avoid all offences of each other at *the beginning* of their conversation. Every little thing can blast an infant blossom, and the breath of the south can shake the little rings of the vine when first they begin to curl like

the locks of a new-weaned boy: but when by age and consolidation they stiffen into the hardness of a stem, and have, by the warm embraces of the sun and the kisses of heaven, brought forth their clusters, they can endure the storms of the north, and the loud noises of a tempest, and yet never be broken.”

The same precaution against trifles, as often leading to breaches in the household bonds, is beautifully expressed by the Irish poet:—

A something light as air—a look,  
A word unkind or wrongly taken,  
The love that tempests never shook,  
A breath, a touch like this has shaken;  
And ruder winds will soon rush in  
To spread the breach that words begin;  
And eyes forget the gentle ray  
They wore in Hymen’s smiling day;  
And voices lose the tone that shed  
A tenderness round all they said;  
Till fast declining, one by one,  
The sweetnesses of love are gone;  
And hearts, so lately mingled, seem  
Like broken clouds, or like the stream  
That smiling left the mountain’s brow,  
As though its waters ne’er could sever,  
Yet ere it reach the plain below  
Breaks into floods, and parts for ever,

Be careful, therefore, to avoid all irritating causes, and by mutual attentions and nameless kindnesses, seek to strengthen the bonds of affection, and make a Home! A place, not merely to eat and sleep in—a mere refectory and dormitory, but a place to live. Seek to make it a

place of social joy and attraction, and thus counteract the fashionable tendency in our day to abandon the home, and seek pleasures abroad. It ought to be a place, not only of sober culture and wholesome discipline, but of recreative pleasure, and sparkling joy, and jubilant songs.

“Why should we fear youth’s draught of joy,  
If pure, would sparkle less?  
Why should the cup the sooner cloy,  
Which God hath deigned to bless?”

4. But no marriage relation can be essentially and permanently happy without the sanctifying influence of religion—or speaking with this pictured scene at Cana before us, without the presence and benediction of Jesus.

“For the triple nature of humanity must be bound by a triple chain,  
For soul and mind and body—*Godliness*, esteem, and affection.”

The Gospel of Christ must pacify the heart, sweeten the temper, and hallow the affections, or the union cannot be truly felicitous. This will lead the wedded couple to a throne of grace, to enliven by prayer their religious sensibility, which is the very fulness and soul of conjugal love and friendship. This not only enjoins, but inspires mutual confidence, and matures those graces that belong to wedlock’s “string of pearls.” This, by a divine chemistry, will convert the very cares and annoyances of life into means of moral improvement and mutual devotion. “The pearl-oyster, by some mysterious secre-



tion, converts the fretting grain of sand, that is forced within its shell, into a costly gem to adorn the neck of beauty." So the Gospel converts the very trials and irritations of married life into those graces of the spirit, priceless pearls, to adorn the domestic union, and beautify their home with salvation.

#### LAST GLANCE AT THE CANA FESTIVAL.

"Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

These words of the governor of the feast, whilst they express literally a practice of festal economy, had a higher sense and profounder thought than he meant. The world does indeed give its "good wine" first; but Christ reserves for his guests the good wine unto the last. It is indeed but the general principle, that by the very condition of our being, if things go right, a conclusion is better than a beginning. "Better," says Solomon, "is the end of a thing than the beginning." It must be so in life, or life is an awful calamity. It must be so in the marriage union, or that union will be a failure of the great end of marriage. According to Christ and Paul, the highest end of conjugal life is the sanctification and moral perfection of the character, to which the physical object must be subordinate and subservient.

But how shall this great moral end be attained? By the presence of Christ in the household.

## THE MORAL END OF MARRIAGE.

But will Christ deign to visit your humble abode? Look at this festival scene at Cana, and then read in the subsequent history of Christ, "So Jesus came again into Cana, where he made the water wine." We cannot suppose, that when he returned to Cana he failed to visit the home of the married couple who had invited him to their wedding, and whose nuptial vows he had sanctified by his presence. Thus Jesus, if honored at your wedding festival, and his presence sought by prayer, will not disdain to visit your married home, and, as at Cana of old, will be nigh in every domestic trial to relieve your anxieties, and soothe your sorrows, consecrate your union, and bless your infant household.

And in Christ you will be able to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and the end will be better than the beginning.

It is a great thing for two frail natures to maintain this moral and life-long unity. It is difficult to keep two harps in perfect harmony: how then shall two harps, each of a thousand strings, be kept in sweet unison through all life's variant moods and jostling cares?—Only by being *one* in Christ. Make Him your abiding guest, who came to open heavenly mansions into our earthly habitations. You need him to keep you in God and with one another. Let the atmosphere of the home have the fragrance of his

heavenly spirit. Then will you grow in personal excellence, mutual affinity, and spiritual assimilation, realizing a peace and happiness in the sacred union, of which you never dreamed in your youthful love. This assimilative growth in the true Christian marriage, is beautifully expressed in these exquisite lines of Tennyson:—

Yet in the long years liker must they grow;  
The man be more of woman, she of man:  
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;  
She mental breath, nor fail in childward care:  
More as the double-natured Poet each:  
Till at the last she set herself to man,  
Like perfect music unto noble words;  
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,  
Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,  
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,  
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,  
Distinct in individualities,  
But like each other even as those who love.  
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men:

Thus will the last days of your marriage be better than the first. You will look back with mutual blessing to the hour of your first union, conscious that through all the vicissitudes of life you have endeavored to make each other better and happier; and He, who was present, and sanctified your marriage vows, will crown your union with the blessedness of those who “are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”



“Ever the richest, tenderest glow,  
Sets round the autumnal sun —  
But there sight fails; no heart may know  
The bliss when life is done.

Such is thy banquet, dearest Lord;  
O give us grace, to cast  
Our lot with thine, to trust thy word,  
And keep our best till last.”

## Chapter Fourth.

CORNELIUS OF CÆSAREA; OR, THE FAMILY ALTAR.

“There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius. . . . .

A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.”

“Around each pure, domestic shrine,  
Bright flowers of Eden bloom and twine;  
Our hearths are altars all.”

THIS home-scene in Cæsarea, in its material aspects, is one purely of the imagination, but, in its moral features, it is fully defined in our conceptions as a home of domestic piety. With the sketch of the sacred penman before us, we readily supply the lights and shadows which complete the moral picture. That it was a home of religious unity, kindly dispositions, and domestic worship, the outlines given by the sacred writer would authorize us to infer. But the central fact in this household, which imparts a beauty and sanctity to the whole domestic scene, and which claims our special attention in this chapter, is the Family Altar. We picture to our minds Cornelius as the father and priest of the family, gathering the household round the domestic altar for prayer and praise. And we therefore take this home-scene as suggestive, as well as illustrative of the special topic of family worship. As

preparatory to the main discussion, it may be well to glance at the religious character and position of Cornelius, as depicted in sacred history.

Cornelius, by birth and education a Gentile, had probably enjoyed the light of revealed religion as received and taught among the Jews. Discarding the idolatry of Paganism, and sincerely yearning for the true religion, he seems, with all his family, to have "embraced the monotheism of the Jews, and doubtless also their Messianic hopes." From several incidents and allusions in the sacred narrative, it is evident that he was acquainted with the historical facts of Christianity. The glimpses he had of the true light, but increased his inward disquietude, and the yearning of his soul for clearer manifestations of that religion which could meet the felt necessities of his spiritual nature.

The chapter which opens with a description of his personal and domestic piety, unfolds the visions and instrumental processes which resulted in his personal knowledge of the Saviour, and reception into the Christian Church by baptism. Cornelius and his household were the first fruits of the Gentiles, the first sheaves of that prospective harvest from the heathen world.

The completeness of his religious character gives peculiar beauty to his domestic piety, and we therefore select this home-scene for the illustration and enforcement of family religion.

The inspired historian, by a few truthful touches, has



portrayed the religious character of Cornelius in its personal and social aspects.

“A devout man, and one that feared God.” This is descriptive of his personal piety, as one who acknowledged and worshipped the true God, and practically obeyed the restraints of religion. So that Cornelius, according to Theophylact, though neither a Jew nor a Christian, lived the life of a good Christian.

“*One that feared God with all his house.*” This indicates the domestic phase of his piety. His own religious sentiments and feelings were diffused throughout his entire household. Although not a descendant of Abraham, he imitated the example of that illustrious prototype of family religion, so highly commended by God: “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.” “*Who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.*” In this we see the completeness and harmony of his character. His life was a practical illustration of love to God and love to man. His heart not only turns earthward with philanthropy, but heavenward in the aspirations of devotion. We recognise in Cornelius the harmony, nay, the essential identity of religion and morality. We see in him “religion with its earthly and social phase, and morality with its axis turned heavenward.” His was not that ostentatious piety which pretends to lift up holy hands to God, but never stretches them out in works of practical philanthropy — “which is

loud in profession, but poor in performance — which makes long prayers, but devours widows' houses." But a piety of faith and works — of devotion and beneficence — a piety in unconscious imitation of Him who came from the lonely conflict of the desert to pursue his mission of mercy and goodness, who came from the midnight prayer on the mountain to walk on and calm the troubled sea.

Such was the piety of Cornelius —

"The light of affection sunned his heart, the tear of the grateful bedewed his feet ;

He put his hand with constancy to good, and angels knew him as a brother."

This harmony and completeness of religious character in Cornelius, give peculiar beauty and power to his example of domestic piety. For, unless the life in its spiritual tone and general expression be conformed to the principles and requirements of gospel morality, the mere formal routine of family worship, so far from proving a personal and social blessing, may only tend to foster self-deception, falsify religion in the face of the household, and scandalize Christianity in the eyes of the world. To secure the great end of domestic worship, there must be entire conformity to the will of God at home and abroad. He who conducts the household devotions, must say *practically*, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" —

"By actions, words, and tempers, show  
That I my heav'nly Master know,  
And serve with heart sincere,"

With this preliminary reference to the personal and domestic piety of Cornelius, we take that phase of the home-scene in which he appears, with his household, in the attitude of worship.

It may serve to give reality and vividness to this pictured household in Cæsarea, to recall that scene of domestic worship in the "Cotter's Saturday Night," in which the aged sire, after the evening meal, gathers the family round him, "turns o'er wi' patriarchal grace, the big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride" — then selects some sweet song of praise from the Psalms of David —

"And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air."

That scene has been in our minds from childhood, as a beautiful, living picture of domestic worship. It was no fancy sketch — no ideal picture of the past; but an exact transcript from real life, as Burns saw it in many a cottage among the pious peasantry of Scotland. It was, indeed, but a transcript from memory, of the home of his own childhood — a cherished reminiscence of his godly father, as he was wont, morning and evening, to worship God with his family. This scene of domestic worship, so familiarized to our thoughts by the genius of the Scottish bard, facilitates our efforts to realize this household of Cornelius. It assumes a defined form and actuality in our conceptions, as a moral picture. We see the pious Centurion, with the family group, gathered around the domestic altar —



“Then kneeling down to heaven’s eternal King,  
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;  
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,  
That thus they all shall meet in future days.”

As the union of the family in the worship of God, is essential to the highest well-being of the household, it claims special attention in these moral pictures, designed to illustrate the true-ideal of home-life.

Our thoughts on this subject naturally arrange themselves in the following order, viz: the duty — the seasons — and the blessings of Family-worship.

## I.

### THE DUTY OF FAMILY WORSHIP.

“Praying always with all prayer.” — PAUL.

Whilst prayer is uniformly recognized in the Bible as a duty, it is nowhere enjoined by any express or formal enactment. “Prayer is nowhere in the Scriptures enjoined as a duty, which was before unknown, and new at the time of the injunction; or as there to be begun. On the contrary, it is always spoken of as a duty already known, confessed, and practised. All the commands concerning it, respect either the times, manner, degree, spirit, universality, or some other circumstance with which the performance ought to be connected. In no instance is the duty enjoined as original, or as the subject of a new institution.”\* With this admitted fact, concerning prayer

\* Dwight’s Theology, vol. iv. p. 116.

in general, it is not strange that even in the New Testament there is no express command to worship God in the family. And if any seek to evade the obligation of domestic worship, on the ground that there is no formal injunction for such worship, a parity of reasoning would invalidate all obligation to pray, either in secret or in the public assembly — and as a consequence we should be left practically in a prayerless and Godless world.

The teachings of Scripture in relation to prayer are perfectly natural—just such as the facts in the case would lead us to anticipate. Men from the beginning had confessed the duty of prayer. There is in every man an inner prompting to pray, and an intuitive belief in the power of prayer. The duty itself is written by the finger of God on the heart, and in man's moral intuitions, the "elder Scripture." And hence prayer, in some form of expression, is a universal characteristic of man. Races of men have been found in the lowest phases of ignorance and degradation; but never without some kind of prayer. In times of peril or sorrow, his soul as instructively turns to some power or being beyond himself for protection, as the infant in its tears pillows its head on the bosom of its mother.

The Scriptures assuming the universal recognition of prayer and its moral obligation, proceed at once to define some of the circumstantialia of the duty—in relation to the manner, spirit, or universality of its performance—without any explicit injunction of the duty itself.

Domestic worship belongs to those duties that are so obvious, that they are rather assumed than commanded. And yet there are numerous passages in the Bible, in which the duty of family prayer is clearly involved. Others in which it is taught by a necessary inference. Take as one instance, the passage from Paul, which we have placed at the beginning of this section — “Praying always with all prayer” — that is, praying at every season suited to devotion, and with such prayers as those united in the duty and the circumstances require. Family prayer is manifestly included in this general direction of the Apostle.

Besides, such prayer is demanded by the very nature of the case. Every Christian must pray; it is the very breathing and pulsation of the renewed nature. There was no more need of a command for the Christian to pray, than for the new-born child to breathe, for in both cases it is the condition and necessity of their very being.

“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
The Christian’s native air.”

And it is just as natural for the Christian to pray with and for those he loves. Prayer is peculiarly a social exercise. “If there were but two human beings upon earth, they would be drawn, if they were of sanctified hearts, to pray with one another. Here we have the fountain of domestic worship.” Two persons of kindred religious spirit, and religious aspirations, would be prompted by a natural law, as well as a gracious impulse



to unite in social worship. Hence, that scene in *Paradise Lost*, in which Adam and Eve are represented as engaged in morning worship, is no mere picture of the Poet's fancy, but a shadowing forth of a reality. The first instance of Family Worship, was undoubtedly in Paradise.

The duty, therefore, instead of being "incorporated into the law of commandments," is left to the pious sentiments and gracious promptings of the renewed heart. But, not only have Christians, with a holy spontaneity, been led to this social worship, but they have been prompted to it by a conviction, that such devotion was absolutely demanded by the very constitution and design of domestic life.

Even without any express New Testament command, it is easy to see that the proper shaping of Christian domestic life, and especially the successful performance of duty as to the religious education of children, require the *Family Altar*, on which the father, as priest, may daily offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and intercession.\*

The *Lord's Prayer* seems obviously to have been intended for family worship. It may be used appropriately in secret devotion, or in the prayers of the church, but, it is evident, from its whole plan and structure, that it was specially intended for the household. Every sentence bears the impress of its social character. And the fact that one petition especially indicates its daily use, shows that it was not primarily or mainly intended for the public worship of the church, since that is not a daily

\* Dr. Schaff's History of the Apostolic Church.

worship. This model prayer, given by our Lord, was manifestly intended for the family and the fire-side, and is thus both a recognition of the duty and a guide for its performance. The Savior assumes the existence of such devotion, and gives to it his sanction and guidance. What higher authority can we ask for the obligation of family worship?

Sacred history furnishes ample testimonials to the practice of domestic worship in all ages of the church. Abraham, the friend of God, was accustomed in his pilgrim wanderings, wherever he pitched his tent, to build an altar, and call on the name of the Lord.—(Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 4, 8.)

Joshua — “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” which resolution obviously included the devotion of the family.

Job, who feared God and eschewed evil, we are told, offered sacrifices for all his children (Job i. 5, 8); sacrifices undoubtedly attended with prayer.

Of David, we read, that after the public services at the tabernacle, he “returned to bless his household,” evidently to perform some solemn act of domestic worship.

Similar testimonials to family religion are found in the New Testament. In the eloquent language of Rev. James Hamilton,\* “Do you envy Cornelius, whose prayers were heard, and to whom the Lord sent a special messenger to teach him the way of salvation? He was ‘a devout man,

\* The church in the house.

one who feared God *with all his house*, and prayed to God always ;' and who was so anxious for the salvation of his family that he got together his kinsmen and near friends, that they might be ready to hear the apostle when he arrived, and share with himself the benefit.\* Do you admire Aquila and Priscilla, Paul's 'helpers in Christ Jesus,' and who were so skilful in the Scriptures, that they were able to teach a young minister the way of God more perfectly? You will find that one reason for their familiarity with Scripture was, that they had "a Church in their house."† In the Bible you find instances of family devotion in all ranks of life, from the king to the artisan, from David's palace to the tent of Aquila; to teach you that whatever be your situation in life, you should still have a church in your house."

There is ample evidence attesting the observance of domestic worship among the primitive Christians. In confirmation of this statement, we make the following extract from a popular and reliable work on Christian Antiquities.

"Instead of consuming their leisure hours in vacant idleness, or deriving their chief amusement from boisterous merriment, the recital of tales of superstition, or the chanting of the profane songs of the heathen, they passed their hours of repose in rational and enlivening pursuits; found pleasure in enlarging their religious knowledge, and entertainment in songs that were dedicated to the praise

\* Acts x. 2, 24, 31, 23.

† Acts xviii. 26; Rom. xvi. 5.



of God. These formed their pastime in private, and their favourite recreations at their family and friendly meetings. With their minds full of the inspiring influence of these, they returned with fresh ardor to their scenes of toil; and to gratify their taste for a renewal of these, they longed for release from labor, far more than to appease their appetite with the provisions of the table. Young women sitting at the distaff, and matrons going about the duties of the household, were constantly humming some spiritual airs. And Jerome relates, of the place where he lived, that one could not go into the field without hearing the ploughman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vinedresser singing the Psalms of David. It was not merely at noon, and in time of their meals, that the primitive Christians read the word of God, and sang praises to his name. At an early hour in the morning the family were assembled, when a portion of Scripture was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer, in which thanks were offered up to the Almighty for preserving them during the silent watches of the night, and for his goodness in permitting them to meet in health of body and soundness of mind; and at the same time his grace was implored to defend them amid the dangers and temptations of the day, to make them faithful to every duty, and enable them in all respects to walk worthy of their Christian vocation. In the evening, before retiring to rest, the family again assembled, when the same form of worship was observed

as in the morning, with this difference, that the service was considerably protracted beyond the period which could conveniently be allotted to it in the commencement of the day. Besides all these observances, they were in the habit of rising at midnight, to engage in prayer and the singing of psalms; a practice of venerable antiquity, and which, as Dr. Cave justly supposes, took its origin from the first times of persecution, when, not daring to meet together in the day, they were forced to keep their religious assemblies in the night.”\*

What has been said may suffice to show the duty of family worship. It is based upon divine authority and illustrated by the example of the pious in all ages. It is commended to us by the universal voice of the church. The same reasons that urge us to pray at all, are equally strong in favor of family prayer. There is an obvious propriety in acknowledging as families our dependence upon God — of rendering united thanksgiving for household blessings — confessing family sins, and conjointly supplicating the divine blessing upon our homes and our children.

\* Antiquities of the Christian Church by the Rev. Lyman Coleman.

## II.

## SEASONS AND CONSTITUENT PARTS OF FAMILY WORSHIP.

“One that feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always.”

“As for me, I will call upon God, evening and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud.”—DAVID.

“Family-worship, as the name imports, is the joint worship rendered to God by all the members of one household.” There should be special care to secure the attendance of all who constitute at the time the household. It gives peculiar beauty and impressiveness to the devotion to suspend all the domestic duties, so that the whole family may participate in the services and blessings of the social worship.

This worship when fully observed consists in the reading of the Scriptures, the singing of praises to God, and prayer. The order may be varied, but neither the singing nor reading can be omitted without impairing the service. The united prayer is the main thing, and that of itself properly conducted would constitute family worship. But singing and reading are important as constituent parts of the service, and conducive to the general result contemplated in such devotions.

The reading of Scripture daily in the family is of vast importance to the different members of the household. The children become familiarized with the word of God,



and receive religious impressions lasting as life. Some members of the family may depend mainly upon this means for their knowledge of divine truth. Besides, the immediate effect of the truth upon the mind is a preparative for communion with God.

Singing is a part of the service in which all may learn to unite, and is eminently promotive of devotional feeling. It is a pleasant method of instilling into the mind of childhood the great truths of religion. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; *teaching* and *admonishing* one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Children easily learn to sing, and naturally find the greatest pleasure in this part of the service. And how beautiful is the sight of a whole family united in the praises of God! How it sanctifies home-duties and relations, and hallows the affectional union of the household! Let not this part of domestic service, when at all practicable, be omitted. "The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous."

The prayer is the principal part of the worship. Let it be comparatively short and instinct with life and animation, so as not to weary the younger members of the household. Let it be peculiar as family prayer, having special reference to household sins, incidents, and blessings, so that each member of the family may feel a personal interest in the devotions.

In that immortal picture of family worship, which

Burns drew from real life among the pious peasantry of Scotland, he has given these several parts of family worship in his own inimitable, life-like manner.

The aged sire gathers the household round the family altar — opens the old family Bible — selects some of “those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide — and, ‘Let us worship God!’ he says, with solemn air.”

“They chant their artless notes in simple guise,  
They tune their hearts, by far their noblest aim,  
Perhaps *Dundee’s* wild warbling measures rise,  
Or sainted *Martyrs* worthy of the name,  
Or noble *Elgin* beats the heavenward flame,  
The sweetest far of *Scotia’s* holy lays.  
Compared with these Italian trills are tame;  
The tickled ears no heart-felt raptures raise,  
Nae unison hae they with our Creator’s praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,  
How Abram was the friend of God on high,  
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
With Amalek’s ungracious progeny;  
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
Beneath the stroke of Heaven’s avenging ire;  
Or Job’s pathetic plaint and wailing cry:  
Or rapt Isaiah’s wild seraphic fire;  
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme:  
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed,  
How He who bore in heaven the second name,  
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;  
How his first followers and servants sped  
The precept sage they wrote to many a land:

How he who lone in Patmos banished,  
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;  
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by heaven's  
command.

Then kneeling down to heaven's eternal King,  
The saint, the father, and the husband prays;  
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,  
That thus they all shall meet in future days:  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,  
Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
In such society, yet still more dear;  
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor religion's pride,  
In all the pomp of method and of art,  
When men display to congregations wide,  
Devotion's every grace except the heart;  
The Power incensed the pageant will desert,  
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;  
But haply in some cottage far apart,  
May hear well-pleased the language of the soul,  
And in His book of life the inmates poor enroll."

#### THE SEASONS OF DOMESTIC WORSHIP.

Of Cornelius it is said, "he prayed to God always;" by which is meant that he prayed frequently, or at the stated hours of the Jews, who offered up their supplications and thanksgivings in the morning, at mid-day, and in the evening. The Psalmist says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice."



Among Christians, by common consent, the two seasons of morning and evening have been appropriated to this service. There is an obvious suitableness in this arrangement. It is important that there should be fixed seasons for family-worship; and these portions of the day are the most favorable for the union of the entire household, without interference with the accustomed duties of life.

Besides there is an obvious moral fitness in morning and evening worship.

#### MORNING WORSHIP.

“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

“New mercies each returning day,  
Hover around us while we pray;  
New perils past, new sins forgiven,  
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.”

What a time for prayer is the serene morning—that silence of the early dawn—the silence, as it were, of expectation—that freshening glow, that new inspiration of life, as if it came from the breath of heaven! The darkness is rolled away—the iron slumber of the world is broken; it is the daily resurrection-hour of rejoicing millions. We wake from the slumbers of the night, and nothing is lost of ourselves in that sleep of forgetfulness. Each limb is filled with life; each sense holds its station; each faculty, each thought, is in its place; no dark insanity, no dreary eclipse, hath spread itself over

the soul. Sleep seems like a returning for a while from self-possession into the immediate hand of God, and mysterious contact with his regenerating life—for a new influx from the Fountain of being, into the very depths of our existence, of freshness and strength. We wake up, soothed and invigorated in every faculty, to renew the service of another day. What shall the thoughts of that hour be, but wondering and adoring thoughts? Well are a portion of our prayers called *matins*, morning prayers—orisons in the first light of day. Devotion is the spontaneous service of the morning. How appropriate—as God gives us new life, and a new world blushing with the dawn, vocal with the song of birds, while clouds of vapor and smoke rise like columns of incense from hill and dale and human homes to heaven—that our hearts should catch the religious sentiment of the morning, “and at the rosy dawn of day” be lifted in adoring gratitude and praise to the Father of lights, whose mercies are new every morning. And then, the blessings of the day depend, in a great measure, on the spirit and manner in which we begin it on the key-note of the morning hour. How appropriate, when the perils of the night are passed, and those of the day are all unknown and untried, when this may be a day of trial, of sad news, of disappointment, of sickness, or of death—how beautiful to gather our household at the threshold of the day, and bow down in humblest adoration before Him “who bids the morn and evening roll,” invoking his guidance and grace and blessing for the day!

Every sentiment of the opening day, every gracious prompting of the renewed heart, seems to summon the family to morning worship —

“To prayer, to prayer! For the morning breaks,  
And earth in her Maker’s smile awakes,  
His light is on all below and above,  
The light of gladness and life and love.  
O, then on the breath of this early air,  
Send upward the incense of grateful prayer!”

#### EVENING WORSHIP.

“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”

“Turn from the beaten path by worldlings trod,  
Go forth at eventide, in heart to walk with God.”

When the cares and trials of the day are ended, and its record is written; when the shadows steal over the earth; when other worlds of the universe are unveiled in the infinitude of heaven; then how natural the promptings of the pious heart to grateful worship. How meet were it then, that in every house there should be a vesper hymn!

“I have read,” says one,\* “of such a scene in a village, in some country — I think it was in Italy — where the traveller heard, as the day went down, and amidst the gathering shadows of the still evening, first from one dwelling and then from another, the voices of song; — it was the vesper hymn. How beautiful were it, in village

\* Dewey.



or city, for dwelling thus to call to dwelling, saying, 'great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways; God of the morning! God of the evening! we praise thee; goodness and mercy hast thou caused to follow us all our days.'"

Beautiful is the evening worship! The members of the family surrounding the domestic altar recount the blessings of the day, then mingle their grateful hearts and voices in the sweet sacrifice of prayer and praise —

"At once they sing, at once they pray"—

Unitedly, they make their confessions of sin, and plead for forgiveness in the name of Jesus, that

"Sprinkled afresh with pard'ning blood"—

they may retire — to rest in peace under the shadow of a Savior's wing — individually repeating the words of the Psalmist, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety," and lulled to the slumbers of the night, with some sweet thoughts of God and heaven —

"When the soft dews of kindly sleep  
My weary eyelids gently steep,  
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest  
For ever on my Savior's breast."

Well does the poet sound the Oriental call from the turrets of the night:—

“To prayer! for the glorious sun is gone,  
And the gathering darkness of night comes on;  
Like a curtain from God’s kind hand it flows,  
To shade the couch where his children repose;  
Then kneel, while the watching stars are bright,  
And give your last thoughts to the Guardian of night.”

### III.

#### THE BLESSINGS OF FAMILY WORSHIP.

“Thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God.”

“Angels are round the good man, to catch the incense of his prayers,  
And they fly to minister kindness to those for whom he pleadeth.”

The advantages of domestic worship justly claim a more extended consideration than is practicable in the concluding pages of this chapter. We can do but little more than offer suggestions, leaving them to the elaboration of your own thoughts, and the blessing of the Divine Spirit.

1. It is obvious that the daily union of the household in social worship will promote that harmony of feeling so essential to domestic enjoyment. It has been truly said, “Family prayer is the oil which removes friction, and causes all the complicated wheels of the family to move smoothly and noiselessly.” There may be occasional jars in the best of families; the irritations of business, or the cares of indoor life, may ruffle the temper, and generate alienations, that mar the beauty of the home-circle.

Sudden ebullitions of temper, or bitter words, may disturb the delicate adjustment of the social harmony. But when they gather round the mercy seat—sing together—and kneel together, with the common *Our Father* upon their lips and in their hearts, how are the petty discords and alienations forgotten and consumed upon the altar of devotion! How are all the discordant elements harmonized into a beautiful oneness! If evil tempers or explosive passions have ruffled the peace and harmony of the household, how the domestic service, like the voice of Jesus, soothes the troubled elements, and beautifies the home-scene with a heavenly calm! Happy the families that realize this pacifying influence of the home-altar, where the daily prayers are as the dews of Hermon!

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

2. Domestic worship, if rightly observed, must be conducive to family religion, and, as a consequence, to domestic order and parental discipline. There is a peculiar adaptation in this daily association of the household in communion with God, to quicken every sentiment and feeling of piety. It is a daily use of the means of grace, under circumstances peculiarly tender and affecting—at the home and fireside,



among those who are nearest our hearts. "Here, if anywhere, the heart will respond to the call of devotion, and be prompted to burst forth in prayer. Here the fainting experience will plume its wings for the attempt of a higher flight, and the joys of a hidden devotion will mingle with the flames of a common altar." And then it is a daily ordinance of religion, in which the household, by religious sympathy and affectional union, are borne upward and onward in the divine life, whilst the divine blessing descends as the rain and silent dew—"as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

And just as this service tends to promote home-piety, will it facilitate parental government. It will deepen the sense of responsibility in the parents, and by multiform expressions of their solicitude for the piety of their household, all will be made to feel that religion in their view, and in fact, is the one thing needful. By fostering the tender relations and vigorous affections of the family, the exercise of parental control will be invested with the sanctity and authority of love, and subordination be recognized as a duty both natural and pleasant. All will move in their respective spheres with the ease and harmony of love. A domestic piety will hallow the duties and cares of life, and make the recreations and pleasures of home such as "leave no stain on the wings of time."

3. Pre-eminent among the blessings of family worship is its influence upon childhood. From the earliest dawn

of intelligence, the children accustomed to the daily service see religion in one of its most affecting forms. They become familiarized with the great ideas of religion from their childhood. Home is consecrated to memory as a place of prayer, as the sanctuary of their earliest religious thoughts and devotions. "In many instances we may suppose, the first believing prayers of the Christian youth ascend from the fireside. Slight impressions, otherwise transient, are thus fixed, and infant aspirations are carried up with the volume of domestic incense. Is it too much to say, that in this way family worship becomes the means of everlasting salvation to multitudes?"\*

We read of the Carthaginian who led his son, when nine years old, to the altar, and made him swear undying hatred and revenge against Rome. The impression grew with his growth; and years after, that child, as a man, marched with burning revenge to the walls of the imperial city. So may the Christian parent win the heart of his child to truth and God, by leading him daily, in the impressible years of childhood, to the altar of prayer. The scene of prayer in the early home, associated with the memory of parents, brothers, and sisters, is never forgotten; it lives on, and ever charms them back to childhood. The old home-restraints lie upon him like a magic chain, perhaps never utterly forced away. That altar of prayer, where once we bowed with father and

\* J. W. Alexander.

mother, has a living history all through life. And the religious impressions of such a home must be influential for good.

Said a man of prayer, now ministering with holy hands at the altar of God, "My heart turns to the family altar, where first I knelt by a mother's side, and a father lifted his voice in supplication. Impressions were then made which time has never effaced. With the first hour of waking and the last hour before repose the breath of prayer mingled. It arrested our youthful feet at the opening of each day, and lingered on our ear as we laid our heads on the pillow. Like the still, calm twilight, it blessed the dawn and close of the day."

Dr. Scott, the Commentator, lived to see his numerous family of children professedly pious, and he declared it to be the fruit of his family devotions. "I look back," said he, a short time before his death, "upon my conduct in this respect with peculiar gratitude, as one grand means of my uncommon measure of domestic comfort, and of bringing down upon my children the blessings which God has been pleased to bestow upon them."\*

Why should not such results flow from family prayer? Do not the divine promises warrant the expectation of such results? Besides the collateral blessings, we are authorized to look for God's special grace in the conversion of our children, in answer to the yearning hearts of

\* Quoted from Thayer's Hints for the Household.



parental love, in their devout aspirations at the family altar.

In many a home the domestic worship has been blessed by God to the saving of souls. We will give some well authenticated *facts* in illustration of this point.

#### THE INFIDEL CONVERTED.

A few years ago, an English gentleman visited America, and spent some days with a pious friend. He was a man of talent and accomplishments, but an infidel. Four years afterwards he returned to the same house, a Christian. They wondered at the change, but little suspected when and where it had originated. He told them that when he was present at their family worship, on the first evening of his former visit, and when after the chapter was read, they all knelt down to pray—the recollection of such scenes in his father's house long years ago, rushed in on his memory, so that he did not hear a single word. But the occurrence made him *think*, and his thoughtfulness ended in his leaving the howling wilderness of infidelity, and finding a quiet rest in the salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ. In his *Fireside*, Mr. Abbot tells us of a gay young lady who paid a visit of a week in the family of a minister, an eminently holy man. His fervent intercessions for his children and the other inmates of his dwelling, went to this thoughtless heart: they were the Spirit's arrow, and upon that family altar his visitor was enabled to present herself a living sacrifice to God.

## A FAMILY CONVERTED.

A man in the western country removed into a new town and took the first measures to establish religious meetings. The Lord blessed his exertions; a church was formed of which he was chosen deacon, and a minister was settled. His family grew up around him, but none of his children were converted, and he felt great anxiety lest *family prayer* should cease after he should be removed. He lived to be upwards of seventy years old, and all the time his constant prayer was, that God would have mercy on his children and not suffer the lamp of piety to go out in his house. One of the sons moved into the family mansion to take care of the old man, as his wife was dead. He still kept up family prayer as usual, never forgetting to pray for his son, that he might be converted and take his place at the family altar. A revival commenced in the town, and the minister heard that there was something unusual at the old family mansion. He called to see them; in one room he beheld six or seven persons weeping, distressed for their sins, and the old man kneeling in one corner, with his eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, crying to God to have mercy on his children. The minister made an effort to address them, but found every thing he attempted to say far beneath the subject. God was there doing his own work — to this God he kneeled and prayed, and then left them. The result was, that the son and several of his children were converted, and the good old

man could say with Simeon, "Now Lord lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

FAMILY PRAYER ESTABLISHED BY A CHILD.

The Rev. John Baily, an eminent divine of the 17th century, was so honored of God as to be made the instrument of the conversion of his own father, while he was yet a child. His mother was a very pious woman, but his father was a wicked man. The good instructions and frequent prayers of the former were so blessed to the soul of little John, that he was converted to God while very young: and having a remarkable gift in prayer, his mother wished him to pray in the family. His father, overhearing him engaged in this exercise, was so struck with remorse and shame at finding his child, then not above eleven or twelve years of age, performing that duty in his house, which he had neglected himself, that it brought on a deep conviction of his wretched state, and proved, through the Divine blessing, the means of his conversion.

But some one may present a counter statement to these facts in his own experience, or the experience of others, in which such results have not followed from the observance of family worship. Then we say there must be something wrong in the family devotions from which God withholds his blessing. "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss." Perhaps the service is a cold and heartless



form, without the true spirit of devotion, without faith. Let not such men think that they shall receive any thing of the Lord. Perhaps the difficulty is more obvious and tangible. There may be discrepancy between the family prayers and the practice. The devotions of the altar are falsified by the life. Such prayers are an abomination to the Lord, and are without any moral power upon the household. But even when the devotions and the life are in harmony, as in Cornelius, there may be discouragement, because of no visible tokens of the divine blessing. We say visible tokens, for the blessing of God must descend and abide upon the home of prayer. The blessing may linger, but it will come.

#### THE DISCOURAGED FATHER.

The Rev. A. D. Merrill states that there was once a pious father, with seven children, who had maintained the worship of God in his family until all his children had grown up to manhood and womanhood, and not one of them had been as yet converted to God. At last the old man's faith began to fail in relation to the promise, and growing "weary and faint in his mind," he resolved to give up his family worship, and confine his devotions to the closet, and to leave his children to do as they pleased. But before he finally proceeded to do this, he concluded to call his children together once again, to pray with them, and explain to them his reasons for this course. Being assembled, and taking up the "old family Bible,"

from which he had so often read to them “the words of eternal life,” he thus addressed them: — “My children, you know that from your earliest recollection I have been accustomed to call you together around this altar, for family worship. I have endeavored to instruct you in the ways of the Lord, and to imbue your minds with the truth. But you have all grown up, and not one of you is converted to God. You are yet in your sins, and show no signs of penitence. I feel discouraged, and have concluded to make no further efforts for your salvation — to demolish my family altar—to confine my own devotions to the closet, and thus endeavor still to work out my own salvation, while I leave you to yourselves.” Upon his speaking thus, first one and then another fell upon their knees, until they were all bowed before God, and besought him, that he would not do as he had resolved, but, that he would still continue to pray for them, and that he would do it now; for they were now ready to give their hearts to God. He bowed with them. The Spirit descended according to the promise, and before they rose from their knees, they were all made happy in God. One of their number, who was married, and away from home, upon returning on a visit, and hearing what great things the Lord had done for the rest of the family, likewise immediately submitted to God, and thus were they all saved, and the covenant promise fulfilled.

Notwithstanding the admitted and manifold blessings of

family prayer, it is painful to reflect that, in many Christian households, there is no home-altar.

Why is it so? There must be serious misapprehensions, imaginary difficulties, or sinful indifference, that lead professed Christians to neglect an observance so reasonable, so obviously demanded by the domestic institution, and so signally owned and blessed by God. We can only glance at some of the difficulties and objections which have been alleged as apologetic of this neglect.

1. Do you say you have no gift of prayer? That you cannot lead the devotions of your family. How do you know this if you have never made the attempt. It needs not genius, learning, or eloquence to pray.

“Pray’r is the simplest form of speech  
That infant lips can try.”

Does it require great natural ability to gather your family around you, read a portion of Scripture, sing a familiar hymn, and then, kneeling down, unite in rendering thanks to God for his goodness, confessing your sins, imploring the divine mercy, and asking for blessings upon your household and the world? Besides the difficulties presumed exist mainly in your imagination: an earnest effort, in reliance upon the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit, would show that they were more formidable in prospect than in reality. If, however, you still persist in your inability, then use some form of prayer. Better do this, than dispense with the stated worship of the



family. Procure some book of family prayers.\* This recommendation to use a form is intended to apply only in extreme cases, where the question is either to pray with a form, or not to pray at all. For we are convinced that the best of all prayers in domestic worship, as elsewhere, are those which, without artificial helps, flow from hearts which "God hath touched."

2. But you say, I never saw any great advantage in this service. It has always seemed a dull and formal observance wherever I have seen it. But it *need* not be so—it *ought* not to be so. Where can we feel, if not when gathering our loved ones, we take them with us to the mercy-seat? Let your whole soul be thrown into the devotions; let your heart and voice be summoned to praise the Lord in some sweet song of Zion, and it will not be a dull and formal service, but one full of life, and commingling sympathies, and heavenly delight. Instead of saying it is dull and wearisome, you will often be constrained to say—

'Tis like a little heav'n below."

Dr. Hamilton relates an incident, illustrating how delightful and soul-satisfying this household worship may become, if conducted with spirit and fervor.

"I was once told of a cottage patriarch who was born in those days when Scotland had a church in almost every

\* We would specially commend the works of Drs. Kurtz and Harkey, or Prayers for Families, by Jenks.

house. There was one in his father's dwelling; and when he pitched a tent for himself he builded an altar. Round that altar a goodly number of olive plants grew up, but, one by one, they were either planted out in families of their own, or God took them, till he and his old partner found themselves, just as at their first outset in life, alone. But their family worship continued as of old. At last his fellow-traveller left him. Still he carried on the worship by himself. So sweet was the memory of it in his father's house, and so pleasant had he found it in his own, that he could not give it up. But as he sat in his silent habitation, morning and evening, his quivering voice was overheard singing the old psalm-tune, reading aloud the chapter, and praying as if others still worshipped by his side. He had not found it dull."

3. But you say, our family is so small. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Are there two or three in your family? Then Christ has promised to be with you. Howard, the philanthropist, never neglected family prayer, though often there was no one but his valet to join in the service. In his travels through England and on the continent, he invariably called Thomason to his chamber, at a certain hour, to unite with him in prayer. If there be but two, though it be but a Ruth and a Naomi, a mother and her daughter, your family is large enough to worship God, and to get the blessing of those who worship him.

4. Some plead the pressure of business as an excuse for

neglecting this service. A little girl, for the first time passing through the streets of a crowded city, innocently inquired, "Mother, when do the people get time to pray here?" Looking at the hurry and bustle along the busy streets, we might ask the same question. And the fact is, that many find no time to pray; and some even say they have no time for family worship. But let me ask such, for what end has God given you time? Was not time given *because* eternity is coming? Is business more important than the salvation of the soul? What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his soul? Unless men will peril their own souls and the souls of their children for eternity, they **MUST** take time for God. You are commanded to "seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and if you reverse or nullify this great moral law, you do it at the peril of your soul. No time for *family* prayer! — how will that excuse look at the judgment-seat?

But without adverting to other objections, we remark that these excuses are not satisfactory to your own consciences, and by no means affect the moral obligation of the duty. And we therefore urge upon all Christian parents the immediate performance of household worship. It is a practice commended by the example of the pious in all ages of the church, and which the Lord has signally owned and blessed. It tends, when rightly conducted, to foster all domestic virtue and filial piety, investing the home with a sacred beauty, as the house of the Lord.



How can you look upon your homes and children, and omit a service to which you should feel prompted by every moral instinct and gracious impulse? Shall the very heathen in their families call on their false gods, and Christian households have no token of their relation to the true and living God? Let it not be so in your family.

A child, witnessing domestic worship in the house of a Christian neighbor, innocently said, "We have no God at papa's house." Shall any of your children ever have occasion to say this of their home? In Greenland, when a stranger knocks at the door, he asks, "Is God in this house?" If they answer, "Yes," he enters. We come, in this appeal, to your dwelling, and knock at your door with the Greenland salutation, "Is God in this house?" Alas! from how many homes, according to the simple idea of the child just mentioned, the response comes, "No God here!"

We commend this subject to your serious thoughts. It may be, your indifference to this duty is attributable to a want of consideration. It may be, the subject has never been brought before your minds in its solemn aspects and its imperative claims. It has been our object, in this chapter, to bring this much neglected domestic service before your minds as a solemn duty, connected with the highest well-being of the household. And we would now urge upon all the neglecters of family worship a prayerful consideration of what has been said.

And by all your love of home — all your tender soli-

citude for the salvation of your children — by all that is solemn and affecting in that final meeting of the family at the judgment-seat of Christ, we beseech you at once to put away all apologies, all fear and shame, and take up the cross, erect the altar of prayer in your home, and say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

I will conclude with the solemn and impressive appeal of the Rev. James Hamilton :

“Fathers and brethren, some of you are the heads of happy families to-day. All that I ask is, that you would make them happier still; happy not only in your love, but in the love of God, the Saviour; happy for time and through eternity. The happiest family will not always be so. The most smiling circle will be in tears some day. All that I ask is, that you would secure for yourselves and your children a friend in that blessed Redeemer, who will wipe all tears from all faces. Your families may soon be scattered, and familiar voices may cease to echo within your walls. They may go each to his own, and some of them may go far away. O see to it, that the God of Bethel goes with them, that they set up an altar even on a distant shore, and sing the Lord’s song in that foreign land! They may be taken from this earth altogether, and leave you alone. O see to it, that as one after another goes, it may be to their Father’s house above, and to sing with heavenly voices, and to a heavenly harp, the song which they first learned from you, and which you often sang together here — the song of Moses and the Lamb.

And if you be taken, and some of them be left, see to it that you leave them the thankful assurance that you are gone to their Father, and your Father, their God, and your God. And, in the meanwhile, let your united worship be so frequent and so fervent, that when you are taken from their head, the one whose sad office it is to supply your place, as priest of that household, shall not be able to select a chapter or psalm with which your living image and voice are not associated, and in which you, though dead, are yet speaking to them. And thus my heart's wish for you all,

“When soon or late you reach that coast,  
O'er life's rough ocean driven;  
May you rejoice, no wanderer lost,  
A family in heaven.”



## Chapter Fifth.

### BETHANY; OR, THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

“Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

“And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard his word.” — LUKE.

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus.” — JOHN.

“My soul was sickened within me, so I sought the dwelling place of joy;

And I met it not in laughter; I found it not in wealth or power;  
But I saw it in the pleasant home, where religion smiled upon content,

And the satisfied ambition of the heart, rejoiced in the favor of its God.” — TUPPER.

THIS home-scene is among the most cherished in Christian memory. Bethany, though a place of great antiquity, and otherwise distinguished, is only recognized in sacred history, as “the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” That rural village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, is remembered only as the home of this pious family.

With the few historic glimpses, we readily picture to our fancy that quiet home on the mountain side, “far from the world’s ignoble strife,” surrounded by the ever-varying and beauteous face of nature.

Two sisters and an only brother constitute the family group. Bereaved of their parents, and secluded from the world, we can easily conceive how they would cleave to each other in sisterly sympathy and brotherly affection. It was moreover a Christian family. Educated in the Hebrew faith, and observant of that ancient form of worship, they seemed to have glided almost unconsciously from the shadow to the substance, from the type to the anti-type, from Moses to Jesus. The Gospel history gives no circumstantial account of their transition from Judaism to Christianity; but indicates clearly their ardent and undissembled attachment to Christ and his mission. "Though as yet there had been no formal renunciation of their former faith and worship — no seclusion from their brethren according to the flesh — still holier fire had been kindled upon their ancient family altar, and holier incense had risen from their hearts, than even ascended from golden censers." The fact of their receiving the despised Nazarene into their household, subjecting themselves to odium and persecution, was at once an evidence of their personal friendship and affection for the Savior, and a practical recognition of Christ as the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel, and the Savior of his people.

With their personal friendship and affection for Jesus as a man, there was united a religious faith which led them to confide in him as their Savior. There was something more than a mere expression of natural affection in Mary's box of ointment poured upon the Savior's feet.

It was a beautiful testimonial to her Lord — a precious memorial of her faith — an act of pious devotion, imparting a fragrance of sanctity to her name, which has rendered it illustrious and immortal.

We see in this home all that is beautiful and lovely in fraternal affection and domestic harmony — sanctified by divine love — a *model* Christian family. It is not strange that such a home should attract the special notice of Jesus. That amid the pressure of his trials, and weariness of his labors, he should seek repose in this quiet home of love, around which there seemed to linger something of the beauty and fragrance of the primeval Eden. How sweet and refreshing to the Savior, after the toils of the day, amidst the rude collisions of the world, and the sad wrecks of sin, to retire to this peaceful household of love and religion, there to receive that responsive sympathy, and those kindly ministries of affection, so soothing to his sensitive heart, so grateful to his human and social nature ! It was indeed a green, genial spot, amid the barren wastes of the world, where his sad and weary heart found repose from the trials of a hard and toilsome life.

Thanks to this pious family for giving to our common Lord, a momentary respite from his toils, and such soul-refreshing entertainment amidst his sorrows. Thanks for his sake, whom not having seen we love ; thanks for our own sakes, in that we have thus a glimpse of Jesus in the social relations. In his public ministry we are alterna-



tely awed by the grandeur of his miracles, the outflashings of his divine glory, and touched by his pity and tenderness to the afflicted and sorrowful; but, in the family at Bethany, we see the social phase of his character, we see him as the companion and friend, honoring and reciprocating those graces of friendship and kindness, those social and domestic attachments which beautify the home on earth and make it a type and an emblem of heaven.

With these glimpses of the family at Bethany, and the gospel record, that “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus,” we have pictured to our minds a home-scene, the most lovely and attractive, Jesus in the midst, with Martha as the ministering spirit, Mary as the devout and listening disciple, and Lazarus the mild reflector of his glory.

This home-picture naturally suggests, and serves to illustrate the following phases of domestic life, viz:—the *fraternal relation*—the *sphere of woman*—*home-cares*—*home-afflictions*—and *Christ in the family*, the *dispenser* of light and joy, in times of darkness and of sorrow.

## THE FRATERNAL RELATION.

“They were together night and day  
Through all their early years —  
Had the same fancies, feelings, thoughts,  
Joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears ;  
They had a fellowship of smiles,  
A fellowship of tears.”

No one can contemplate this little household at Bethany, without feeling that, next to their joy in God, was the joy of their fraternal love and unity.\* We conceive of these sisters and their brother, as living together in the interchange of the kindest fraternal feeling, and all those delicate attentions, and graceful evolutions of the affections, which so beautify the home-circle. There is an indefinable pleasure in the mere conception of such a picture of domestic life. Let it be the earnest effort of every band of brothers and sisters to actualize in their paternal home, what they cannot help but admire in the family at Bethany.

Having already considered the primary relations of the family, we now turn to the collateral relations of the household, or the duties of —

## BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

The very bonds of the social circle teach us to love one another. A member of the family without love is nothing

\* We use the term fraternal in its more comprehensive sense, inclusive of sisterly affection.

but a cold marble image, or, rather, a machine, an annoyance, a something in the way to vex and pain us. The social relations not only teach love, but demand it. Take any family, where there is a want of affectional unity — where there is selfish ambition or jealousy and distrust among the members of the household, and it must of necessity be a discordant and an unhappy family. There may be punctilious decorum and formal politeness, even “threatening urbanity,” and yet with all this there is no true peace or happiness. The household wants love, and if it will not have that it must suffer; and it ought to suffer.

It must be obvious, therefore, that a proper regard to this relation of brothers and sisters is essential to the peace and happiness of home.

The duties of the fraternal relation are founded ultimately upon the will of God as expressed in the relation itself, and its inseparable connection with the well-being of the family. As in nature there are two great laws of harmony — the central gravitation and cohesive affinity, so in the domestic economy we have two great principles of social harmony — filial affection and fraternal affinity. The heart of the child that turns to the mother, is drawn to the brother or sister that was nurtured on the same bosom. Indeed, there can be no true filial affection that does not involve the fraternal, when the relation exists to call it forth. They are as inseparable as attraction and cohesion in nature. And ordinarily, as in these two



forces of nature, the fraternal affinity is in proportion to the filial love.

Children cannot truly love their parents without loving one another; but as in nature the central and cohesive forces may be disturbed and the harmony destroyed, so may there be admitted into the household counteracting moral forces, producing disorder and repulsion among the members of the family. And as the very charm of home-life depends essentially upon the affectional harmony among the younger members, this subject cannot fail to assume its just degree of importance in our portraiture of the home-scenes of the New Testament.

There is doubtless a congenital affinity, an instinctive attraction between children of the same parentage. It is something more than mere congeniality, for that may not always exist between brothers and sisters. It is something more than friendship — an inborn feeling of affinity, more delicate, exquisite, and intense than the purest friendship. That there is such a natural affinity is evidenced by our own consciousness, and from the fact that no discords are so universally odious and repulsive as those existing among children of the same household.

The very words expressive of the fraternal relation touch a responsive chord in every heart. When William Penn met the Indians, and uttered those noble terms of a common brotherhood, "We are one flesh, and one blood," they responded to the fraternal appeal in these memorable

words, "We will live in love with William Penn and his children as long as sun and moon shall endure."

But even stronger than this felt brotherhood of humanity, is the fraternity of the household. To those who in childhood and youth have answered to the call of brother and sister, the words acquire a beauty and sanctity that live in us forever. The natural affinity is fostered and strengthened by so many sweet memories and hallowing associations. There is the nursery, where their infancy was watched by the same loving eye, their little sorrows soothed and forgotten on the same maternal bosom, and their nightly slumber wooed by the same cradle-song. There are the family gatherings, and winter evenings at home, and the rambles in summer fields, the excited sympathies about the couch of sickness, and perhaps in the chamber of death. O how these home joys and sorrows tend to fuse the hearts of the household in mutual sympathy and love. The very relation itself, with its manifold associations, all tend to inspire and foster the fraternal union and affection.

It is manifest, then, that in the will of God, revealed in the domestic constitution, the welfare of its members we find the true basis of the fraternal relation. The fraternal sentiment must, therefore, be in harmony with the manifested will of God in the domestic economy. "When true, the fraternal sentiment unites congeniality with consanguinity, and develops friendship from kindred blood, as

the parted branches open into leaves and blossoms and fruits, kindred in their aims as their source."

There is, indeed, no scene on earth more pleasant and lovely than that of brothers and sisters, who, with all their differences of taste and temperament, dwell together in mutual devotion, keeping the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is indeed like the dew of Hermon, that threw its silver veil over mountain and valley, and refreshed and beautified each tree and flower with a baptism from heaven."

In view of the importance of this relation of the members of the household, allow me to offer some suggestions that may be conducive to a right apprehension and observance of the duties of

#### THE FRATERNAL RELATION.

1. And my first suggestion is, to avoid with special care and prayerfulness those passions that are utterly destructive of all true fraternal feeling. Guard against the first indications of a spirit of jealousy—a spirit which, if indulged, will paralyze the warm and generous feelings of the youthful heart, and infuse the deadliest poison into the very life-blood of the social nature. If this temper once gain a lodgment in the mind, there will not be wanting in the daily routine of domestic life fancied



partialities, or petty favoritisms, to inflame the passions and rend the bonds of fraternal amity and love ; for,

“ It is jealousy’s peculiar nature  
To swell small things to great ; nay, out of thought  
To conjure much, and then to lose its reason  
Amid the hideous phantoms it has formed.”

Different endowments of mind, and other idiosyncracies, may determine different positions of honor and preferment to the different members of the household, and thus there may be occasion for developing these latent passions of the human heart. And unless the first kindling of the passion be suppressed, it will engender alienation and hatred, strife and every evil work. We see the sad working of these evil passions in the first human family. Let the wretched Cain, with the guilt of fratricide upon his soul, speak in solemn tones of warning against the first indulgence of that temper, which, in its outworking mastery, led to results so sad and tragical. Seek by divine grace to quench the first sparks of these subtle and wasting passions. Honor thy father and mother by confiding in their impartial love and discretion in the distribution of household favors, and trust that a discriminating judgment and generous goodness, and not a selfish partiality or petty favoritism, prompt their favors and allotments to the different members of the family. And thus by cherishing a true filial love, you will strengthen the bonds of fraternal affection, and effectually crush those meaner passions of envy and jealousy. Thus you will best honor

the primal laws of domestic harmony, cheer the hearts of your parents, and promote the great end of the fraternal relation.

2. Assuming the religious element as essential to this as every other domestic virtue, we suggest as a positive requisite in this relation, strong fraternal affection. This is here, as in every social excellence, the bond of perfectness. There is an instinctive feeling of affinity between brothers and sisters, which may prompt to many expressions of mutual kindness and affection; but without the conservative element of religious faith and love, this mere instinctive feeling will be fitful and variable, and under trying circumstances may be wholly counteracted by the forces of sinful passions.

From the variant moods of temper, perplexing cares, and the conflict of different temperaments and interests, there will be occasion, daily, for the exercise of kindness, forbearance, gentleness, and charity. And unless there be a deep, sanctified, fraternal love, the very selfishness of the human heart will occasion angry collision and strife — each one seeking to centralize in self, the favors and immunities of the household.

Without a pure fraternal love, there cannot be that mutual deference and consideration so essential to domestic harmony. “All cannot have all the favors, and the division of them may embroil a household as bitterly as the division of an empire has embroiled rival heirs of thrones.” This natural tendency will be counteracted by a love which

leads each to consider the trials, dispositions, and rights of the other. It will inspire a sense of oneness, of essential identity, as members one of another. And that motto, "every thing for all," expressive of the true object of society, would become the practical sentiment of the household.

It is easy to perceive how such a sentiment, as a living, practical truth, would excite in the younger members of the family, gentleness, mutual sympathy, and fraternal unity. It is equally obvious that this mutual consideration would operate most happily in those cases of common occurrence in the family, where there is a special demand for patience and forbearance from the stronger towards the weaker, the older towards the younger, the more gifted towards those with less natural endowments; as well as for those vigils beside the couch of sickness, and that quick and responsive sympathy, so soothing and sustaining in the first trials and sorrows of life. How much may brothers and sisters, by this affectionate consideration, contribute to each other's progress in personal excellence and social virtues! And how will these fraternal virtues act and react collaterally with manifest power, and in the social as in the natural world, it is the side-light and warmth that most applies the cheering rays from above.

The following extract from *John Angell James*, will serve to illustrate and enforce the design and moral beauty of fraternal affection and unity:—



“A family of grown up children should be the constant scene of uninterrupted harmony, where love, guided by ingenuity, puts forth all its powers to please, by those mutual good offices, and minor acts of beneficence, of which every day furnishes the opportunity, and which, while they cost little in the way either of money or labor, contribute so much to the happiness of the household. One of the most delightful sights in our world, where there is so much moral deformity to disgust, and so much unkindness to distress, is a domestic circle, where the parents are surrounded by their children, of which the daughters are being employed in elegant or useful work, and the elder brother some instructive and improving volume, for the benefit or entertainment of the whole. \* \* \* \* \* Young people seek your happiness in each other's society. What can the brother find in the circle of dissipation, or amongst the votaries of intemperance, to compare with this? What can the sister find in the concert of sweet sounds, that has music for the soul, compared with this domestic harmony? or in the glitter and fashionable confusion, and mazy dance of the ball-room, compared with these pure, calm, sequestered joys, which are to be found at the fireside of a happy family?”

3. We might speak of those mutual acts of courtesy and gentleness, and unaffected urbanity, which so beautify the household. These graces of manner are the delicate blossoms of the more substantial domestic virtues, the tendrils that gracefully adorn the altars of home, and

diffuse the fragrance of love, like Mary's box of ointment. We have often seen in households, otherwise commendable, a coarseness and bluntness of manners, harshness of tone, and even severity in repartee, that have marred the beauty of the home-scene. On the other hand we have witnessed families, where, in addition to the more substantial virtues, were seen the most courteous demeanor, a gentleness of expression, an unstudied refinement of manners, that have invested the fraternal relation with a sort of poetical beauty, and thrown an unearthly charm about the home-circle.

We can only offer these remarks as suggestions upon this point, hoping, they will lead brothers and sisters to consider for themselves how much their attention to these gentler graces of social refinement, may contribute to the general beauty and well-being of the household.

4. The crowning duty of brothers and sisters is that of being mutual helpers in the development of individual character. It is in this way the fraternal relation becomes subsidiary to the main design of the domestic economy, in securing the moral perfection of the different members of the household. There is a peculiar adaptation in the relation of brothers and sisters, from likeness and unlikeness of constitution, to develop the finest harmonies of character. The principle to which we refer is recognized by Mrs. Jameson, in her strictures upon school life.

"I am convinced from my own recollections, and from all I have learned from experienced teachers in large

schools, that one of the most fatal mistakes in the training of children has been the too early separation of the sexes. I say has been, because I find that everywhere this most dangerous prejudice has been giving way before the light of truth and a more general acquaintance with that primal law of nature, which ought to teach us that the more we can assimilate on a large scale the public to the domestic training, the better for all. There exists still, the impression—in the higher classes especially—that in early education, the mixture of the two sexes would tend to make the girls masculine and the boys effeminate, but experience shows us that it is all the other way. Boys learn a manly and protecting tenderness, and the girls become at once more feminine and more truthful.”

These sentiments are endorsed by our own judgment and consciousness. But they act with peculiar force in the association of brothers and sisters. There is just that adaptation of the one to the other, which meets a great want in each case, which scarcely any other agency can reach, at least not so gently and efficiently. How beautiful to behold a brother assuming the office of counsellor to a younger sister, and watching each unfolding grace and beauty of character! How beautiful to see an older sister watchful over a brother, encompassing his path as a guardian angel, imparting a refining touch to his coarser nature, and by influences, gentle, but mighty and formative, moulding his character after her highest ideal of the great and good.

We cannot fail to recognize in this relation a most



beneficent provision for the perfection of individual character, and the culture of the heart in the earlier years of life. Those whom God has so united should seek in every worthy way to be mutual helpers to each other. How may the sister, with her quick perception of the right, and her feminine purity, act as an earnest, but kind and gentle censor of a youthful brother, checking his wayward impulses, and guiding to noble ends his impassioned nature. And how may the brother, with manly judgment and honor, shield a sister from the rude storms of the world, and by considerate counsels and tender interferences, divert her from many of the follies of fashionable life, and blandishments of pleasure. O, what a beneficent and reciprocal power for good is vested in the fraternal relation! What might not sisters do, by the proper exercise of their sisterly influence, to hold back their brothers from sinful excesses, and those snares that beset the path of the young! And what controlling power might a noble brother exert on sisters, in restraining them from the foolishness of a vain and flippant life, indecent costumes, immodest dances, and equivocal friendships! It is easy to perceive, from these suggestions, how manifold and beneficent this relation may become, and was doubtless designed to be, in the education of home.

“Would we know what brother and sister have been to each other, listen to the triumphal song of Miriam, as she braced anew the great heart of the law-giver with timbrel and psalm; or look to the grave of Lazarus, where Mary and Martha stood with Him who was the Resurrection

and the Life. Do we ask more modern instances, stand under the open heavens and remember how Caroline Herschel shared the vigils of their illustrious explorer — open the pages of Neander, and think of her whose devotedness made a pleasant home of his otherwise solitary study, and encouraged him in his noble work of tracing out the progress of the divine life throughout all the mazes of theological controversy, and making church history a book of the heart, instead of the disputatious understanding. Do we need more — only conjecture the number of cases nearer at hand in which youth have been counselled and helped on through years of preparation to their calling or profession by a sacrifice that looked not to the world for motive, and asked not of the world reward for its success.”

But this culture of fraternal affection and its associated blessings do not terminate with the paternal home. It is in accordance with the divine method that the affections shall grow outward from within; so that the children who have schooled their filial and fraternal feelings at home, are prepared to go out into the wider sphere of humanity, with hearts that throb with a world-wide brotherhood and a divine and heavenly Fatherhood.

Happy the home where the children dwell together in unity and love! Where no feelings of envy or jealousy interrupt the flow of kindly sympathy. Where brothers and sisters are gentle and considerate; and by mutual devotion, seek to strengthen the bonds of fraternal affec-

tion. Such homes, like the holy family of Bethany, will attract the favor, and secure the enriching and perpetual benediction of the Savior.

Let all apply these thoughts. Children, apply them, and be kind in all you do and say. Youth, apply them, and be thoughtful where you are often tempted to be reckless. Elders, apply them, and never allow care or worldliness to chill the better affections of early days. Deep in the heart let the old home live, and its pleasant memories, brightened by kindly offices, open ever into immortal hopes. Old things must pass away, but from the Christian they can only pass away by being all made new—new in a spirit, that remembers best when progressing most, and crowns all friendships with charity divine.

## II.

### THE POSITION AND SPHERE OF WOMAN.

“Then Jesus . . . . came to Bethany. . . . . There they made him a supper; and Martha served. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.”—JOHN.

“So woman, born to dignify retreat,  
Unknown to flourish, and unseen be great,  
To give domestic life its sweetest charm,  
With softness polish, and with virtue warm,  
Fearful of fame, unwilling to be known,  
Should seek but Heaven’s applauses and her own.”

H. MORE.

The above quotations from the gospel record present a new phase of the home in Bethany—a phase suggestive



of the special topic of this section. The attitudes of the two sisters indicate the true sphere and mission of woman. Martha serving, and Mary in her outgushing affection anointing the feet of Jesus, is a pictorial representation of that sphere as home, and that mission as one of the affections, and in those relations and kindly offices which specially pertain to the affections.

The subject, in addition to its inherent importance, acquires special interest from the fact that the voice of Mary Wolstoncroft, claiming masculine freedom for her sex, has found a thousand echoes in our land, demanding a reform of our social system in favor of what is technically styled "woman's rights." The claim of these modern agitators, though radically unphilosophical, and preposterous in many of its details, is nevertheless deserving of something more than a passing sneer, or the taunt of fanaticism. For under much that is flippant and extravagant, are significant truths. The cry itself indicates a spreading conviction that woman is not fulfilling her whole work in the social economy; which is a fact deserving our consideration. It moreover indicates something wrong in the working of a system which dooms thousands of the sex to self-wasting and life-long toils, which barely keep off cold and starvation. Who can read that touching "Song of the Shirt," by the noble bard of Freedom, without having his soul stirred with something of the feeling that is now crying for reform. And who can think of that darker wrong done to woman in that strange and unrighteous judgment of men, which

smiles upon the destroyer of innocence, passing over his "deep damnation" as a venial thing, while it dooms the victims of his seductive arts, the Magdalens, to perpetual infamy. These things do indicate something radically wrong in our social system; and we should at least be respectful and tolerant towards those who cry for reform, even if its tones and utterances seem to us too boisterous and extravagant for gentle lips.

But with all these concessions, we are still as confident that the special reform contemplated by these dreamers, and the method proposed for its accomplishment, are radically wrong, and if actualized would be introductory to social evils infinitely worse than the existing wrong which we unitedly deprecate. For any scheme which would take woman from the quiet sphere of home, to speculate in the market, scale the unsheltered heights of ambition, or in any way make her the rival of man in pursuits which demand the implements of muscular toil—his ruder nature and sterner will—we believe to be a monstrous error; a scheme not only at variance with the will of God, as expressed in the original creation, but destructive of the spherical unity of life, and the great end of the domestic economy.

Woman was designed to move in a different sphere from man. The delicacy of her physical organization—her peculiar sensibilities, and the intuitions of her nature, indicate that sphere with unmistakable certainty. Every woman conscious of her true dignity glories in her sphere,

as the moon in her orbit. And every attempt to change that sphere, assails, as has been justly said, a great and beautiful law of nature, and makes a demand which the general sentiment of her own sex will repudiate — I refer to that principle of duality which runs through the universe, dividing every perfect whole into two parts, assigning to each its own appropriate work. It is the duality of day and night, of the leaf and the flower, of the hand and the heart. Thus woman is the counterpart of man. She is equal to him, not because she has the same work to accomplish, but a work equally great, a work essential to the complete circle of human duty, to the consummation of human destiny.

The question of the equality, or comparative merits of the sexes, started by this reform, is the most useless and impertinent ever excited by controversy. From the very nature of the case a decision of the question either way would be wrong; for there is no admissible ground of comparison between the two sexes. “You might as well inquire which of any two of the great essential elements of existence, or laws of matter, or faculties of mind, could best be spared; you might as well debate the *comparative merits* of spring and autumn, of morning and evening, of oxygen and hydrogen, of memory and hope, of the centripetal and centrifugal attractions. Each holds its title by the ordaining of a divine plan; and the displacement of either from its sphere would be a resolution of the



whole system into chaos.”\* The whole controversy, therefore, in its aim is a monstrous absurdity, and a most impertinent effort to put asunder what God has joined together.

But what are the distinguishing peculiarities of the sexes, which indicate their respective spheres? It will not do to press this question too far by any formal analysis, lest we fall into the very error against which we are contending. And yet, in addition to peculiarities already indicated, we may assert, in the language of the eloquent divine just quoted, “that the distinguishing faculty of man is mental concentration; that of woman, moral impulse. Woman is the representative of affection; man of thought. Woman carries her strength in her heart; man, in his head. Neither one monopolizes the special department; but, by eminence, he is intellect—she is love.” Coleridge has the same sentiment—“A woman’s head is usually over ears in her heart. Woman has more heart than man. She was made to love. Her crown is in her *heart*, and not on her head.”

This peculiarity indicates at once her sphere and her pre-eminent greatness. But just here it is that the error of these reformers begins. They repudiate this discrimination, because it seems a disparagement of woman, making her inferior to man. It is the heresy with which we are all more or less infected, that the heart is inferior to the head, and that a great intellect is more to be honored than a good and loving spirit. Hence some

\* Huntington’s Sermons.

of these reformers are indignant at the theory, "that man represents the head, and woman the heart, and refuse to acknowledge that the heart is greater than the head, love than logic, purity than eloquence, holy living than able reasoning." And yet this discrimination is recognized by the greatest minds, whose sentiments have been purged of the old barbarous error which sets Napoleon above Howard, and a wicked orator over a working saint.

An eloquent man of our age, speaking of this pre-eminence of love in woman, consecrated to deeds of kindness and mercy, says, "Her life is poured out like the fair light of heaven around the bedside of the sick. She comes like a last sacrament to the dying man, her very presence an alabaster box of ointment, exceeding precious, filling the house with the balm of its thousand flowers. Her love adorns the paths wherein she teaches youthful feet to tread, and blooms in amaranthian loveliness above the head laid low in earth. . . . In the presence of such affection as this, the intellect of a Plato would be abashed. . . . In sight of such excellence I am ashamed of intellect; I would not look upon the greatest mind that ever spoke to ages yet unborn."

It is because the great dramatist recognized the distinction in the sexes, that some have found fault with his female characters, as inferior to his characters of men. He saw, what some of these pseudo reformers seem unable to see, how woman can equal man, without becoming man; or how she can differ from him without being inferior to

him. Equality, according to their ideas, involves identity, and is therefore incompatible with subordination, and runs directly into substitution; and such in fact, is the equality which these reforms have of late so frequently and so excruciatingly urged upon us. On this ground woman cannot be made equal with man, except by unsexing and unsphering her — a thing which Shakspeare was just as far from doing as nature is. “To say then that his women, according to this view of the matter, are inferior to his men, is merely to say they are women, as they ought to be, and not men, as he meant they should not be, and as we have reason to rejoice they are not.”\*

This modern cry for “woman’s rights,” is founded on a total misconception of this relative distinction of the sexes. It proceeds upon the assumption, that equality and diversity are wholly incompatible; and that consequently the sexes cannot stand or sit on the same level, without standing in each other’s shoes or sitting in each other’s seats. And it is because they have either mistaken, or are unwilling to acknowledge the principle, that humanity is two-fold and is perfect only in the man and the woman; the one, the representative of the intellect, the other, of the heart, that such unreasonable demands are made for equality. Much that is said upon the subject is what Napoleon styles, vagabondism of the imagination. “I do not like,” said he, “women who

\* Hudson.



make themselves men, any more than I like men who render themselves effeminate."

But we dismiss any further notice of the vagrant reasoning of these idle dreamers, and return to the original question, What is the sphere of woman? If there is any thing reliable in the inference from God's creative act, "male and female created he them;" if her delicate bodily organization, a symbol of the finer issues of spirit, proves any thing—if there is any thing, in her mental and affectional aptitudes, indicative of her mission—if that law of the Divine operations, by which different contrivances imply a variety of purposes, establishes any thing, then we have the most unquestionable indications of the divine intention in regard to the sphere of woman. Man is the representative of thought, woman of affection.

Man by eminence is intellect—woman is love. "Is it nothing for woman to remember when her sex is made the type and tabernacle of love, that we have ascribed the loftiest glory even to the Almighty Father, when we have said that his name is love?" So far then from being a disparagement, it is the highest distinction of woman, that she is the type and tabernacle of love—that her highest characteristic name is love. And this indicates at once her sphere and her pre-eminent glory. This sentiment is beautifully expressed by our great American poet:—

"What I most prize in woman  
Is her affections, not her intellect!"

The intellect is finite, but the affections  
 Are infinite, and cannot be exhausted.  
 Compare me with the great men of earth;  
 What am I? Why a pigmy among giants!  
 But if thou lovest—mark me! I say lovest!  
 The greatest of thy sex, excels thee not!”

In correspondence with this distinctive characteristic of woman, is her place and power in society. And whilst she is not interdicted the higher walks of science and philosophy, and may reap all the honor she deserves, as is instanced in Mrs. Somerville, or our own Miss Mitchell—yet is there a realm all her own, sacred to her peculiar ministry. It is the sphere of home and the affections. She is divinely constituted the priestess of the inner temple; and to her are entrusted the veiled shrine and sacred offices of the home-sanctuary.

#### THE CHRISTIAN ASPECT OF WOMAN'S SPHERE.

“For contemplation he, and *valor* form'd;  
 For softness she, and sweet attractive Grace;  
 He for God only, she for God in him.”—MILTON.

The whole spirit and teaching of the New Testament confirm the view of woman's sphere, which we have just presented from a simple process of induction, and it utters its uniform protest against the impertinent assumptions of these modern reformers. Whilst the Savior showed his estimate of woman by uniformly saluting her with the most dignified tenderness, and assigned her a place of charitable ministration in the Apostolic Church, he never

encouraged any publicity that would interfere with home-duties. Whilst he welcomed her as a listening disciple, or commended her devotion in anointing his feet, or hovering as an angel of love about his path of sorrow, he never called her to any public office in his church, or commissioned her to go forth as a public teacher of mankind. His gospel met its warmest reception in the heart of woman, and gave new lustre to her domestic virtues, consecrated her affectional nature to manifold ministries of mercy, and nerved her shrinking delicacy to the heroism of the martyr; but it never produced a public declaimer, an Amazonian disputant, nor a shameless contender for political and ecclesiastical rights. It raised her up from Pagan servility to her true social position, but left her in her own sphere. It enlarged the sphere of her influence, but it never changed her mission.

Christianity so far from interfering with the sphere of woman as ordained in the beginning, has recognized and honored that sphere, and given a higher consecration to her mission. "By its indestructible reverence for the Virgin Mother of our Lord, the Christian Church has not only woven into its sentiments a new idea of woman, but it has done something to cancel the contempt that was thrown upon her in the person of Eve, the seduced of Satan. If woman was first in the world to sin, it was on her breast also that its Redeemer was nourished; and Bethlehem has atoned for Eden. Abating its superstitious excesses, the homage paid to the Madonna is a con-



secration of womanhood quite becoming a religion that displaced Paganism, and condemns sensuality.”\*

This position of woman, indicated by her very constitution and moral aptitude, and honored by Christianity, commends itself to all women, conscious of her true dignity and crowning glory. There are some women, of cold hearts and masculine nerves, whose Amazonian grossness and vulgarity have displaced their native gentleness and delicacy, who may aspire to public station and manly fame, and affect to scorn the duties of home, as narrow and degrading; but every true woman will repudiate such contempt and such vainglorious aspirations. And with her intuitive perception of what is orderly and beautiful in the social system as ordained of God, she will ask, if woman is to go out upon the busy thoroughfares of life, who is to keep bright the home and train the infant mind? If she is to rival man, amid the clamors and struggles of the outer world, who, when he is fevered with cares, and turns back to his home, shall welcome him there, and with words of kindness and love, soothe his weariness and stimulate his flagging spirits? If she is to wrangle in halls of debate, and become giddy with ambition, or drunk with fame, who shall watch by the sick-bed, bind up the broken-hearted, or glide on missions of kindness and mercy to the homes of the poor and sick and sorrowful? Oh! no!—is the spontaneous outburst of her indignant rebuke—let no sacrilegious hand thus profane the old

\* Huntington.

sanctuaries of our world, by diverting the ordained priestesses that minister at their shrines, to the vulgar cares of outer life ! Let no Goth or Vandal thus ruthlessly break down our domestic altars, and make desolate our beautiful homes ! Let us recognize those gentle and social virtues which are peculiarly our own, and the divine ordination, by which, since they came out together from the gates of Eden, woman has walked side by side with man, through life's joys and sorrows, conscious that woman is never more honored,

“Than when the homely task she plies,  
With cheerful duty in her eyes ;  
And, every lowly path well trod,  
Looks meekly upward to her God.”

This scene in Bethany — Martha *serving*, and Mary engaged in a *ministry of love* beside her Savior, reveals the true sphere of woman ; as home, and her mission, as one of the affections.

#### I. — HOME.

“For nothing lovelier can be found  
In woman, than to study household good,  
And good works in her husband to promote.”—MILTON.

Let no one, dazzled with the glitter of outward splendor, look upon household duties as trifling and undignified. We do not rightly estimate things, if we fail to recognize in the elemental school of the family the most important sphere of life. Is not the quiet and hidden bosom of the

earth, that nurtures with hidden treasures the germs and roots of plants, as important in the economy of nature as the sun and air, which combine to unfold the blossoms, and ripen the clustering fruits, and waft as incense the sweet perfumes? Just such is the relation of the quiet home to human life. There the germs of mind and of our public institutions are nurtured. It is the face of woman which first bends over the breathing child—looks into its eyes; and it is her prerogative, by manifold offices of love and duty, to mould and fashion that unfolding mind. The great statesman, philanthropist, poet, philosopher, and the humble ambassador of heaven, go forth upon their several missions, having received the first inspirations and formative touches in the secluded home. The heart which breathed its devotional affection upon the opening mind of childhood, is felt in the pulsations of the great heart of humanity. The voice which sings the nursery hymn mingles in the multitudinous sounds of the wide world. The hand which rocks the cradle moves the world. This is not fancy; but according to the historical fact stated by a distinguished writer, that not a single reformer, statesman, or saint, has come to influence or adorn his age, from Jacob to Washington, who was not reared by a remarkable mother that shaped his mind. And is such a sphere to be viewed as too narrow for the aspiring ambition of women who seek to rival man in the more public walks of life? Nay! she who trains a soul to noble aims and virtuous deeds, “stands higher in the



scale of benefactors, than he who unshackles a continent from thralldom; for she adds more to the sum of human happiness, if we estimate the effects by their duration.”\*

And how beneficent may be her influence and power in this sphere as a wife! Great, indeed, may be her moral power to soothe her husband in despondency, by her quicker intuitions and finer moral sense to guide him in times of perplexity, or pour the balm of her own gentle spirit upon his sad and troubled heart. What a touching testimonial to the mission of woman in this relation, is that sorrowful memorial of his wife, written by Sir James Mackintosh to a friend:

“She was a woman,” he writes, “who, by the tender management of my weaknesses, gradually corrected the most pernicious of them. She became prudent from affection; and, though of the most generous nature, she was taught frugality and economy by her love for me. During the most critical period of my life she preserved order in my affairs, from the care of which she relieved me. She gently reclaimed me from dissipation, she propped my weak and irresolute nature, she urged my indolence to all the exertions that have been useful or creditable to me, and she was perpetually at hand to admonish my heedlessness and improvidence. To her I owe whatever I am—to her whatever I shall be. In her solicitude for my interest she never for a moment forgot my character. Her feelings were warm and impetuous;

\* Chalmers’ Memoirs, vol. i. p. 246.

but she was placable, tender, and constant. Such was she whom I have lost; and I have lost her when a knowledge of her worth had refined my youthful love into friendship, before age had deprived it of much of its original ardor."

That passage in Washington Irving, descriptive of woman's mission in adversity, has lost nothing of its beauty by long familiarity:

"As the vine which has long twined its graceful foliage around the oak, and been lifted by it into sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is rifted by the thunderbolt, cling around it with its creeping tendrils, and bind up its shattered boughs — so is it beautifully ordered by providence that woman, who is the dependant and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his stay and solace when smitten with adversity — winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting his drooping head, and binding up his broken heart."

It is, indeed, a beautiful ordinance of divine providence that the weak should sometimes be the support of the strong. Woman, the graceful dependant of man in his sunnier hours, becomes his consoler and strength in adversity —

"Wreathing him flowers to make his joys more bright;  
Or when the storm has spread its darkest shroud,  
To gild with hope the rainbow on the cloud."

But beyond the home-circle opens a wide sphere for the beneficent mission of woman. It is a beautiful feature in the moral economy of the church, no less than of nature, that the charities of life are pre-eminently assigned to female enterprise. And as Christianity spreads over the earth her sphere of love widens, and the world is open to her ministry of mercy. In the wide range of ignorance, poverty and suffering, she may perform her labors of love without neglecting the primary duties of home, or doing violence to her womanly nature or feminine graces.

She may not plead with assembled multitudes, in the platform or the pulpit, and by the eloquence of speech stir the hearts of the people to noble deeds of philanthropy — but she can plead the cause of humanity in the social circle, and stimulate others by her example. She can glide like an angel of mercy through the dark places of a great city pulsating with life, and minister to the lowly in their ignorance and sorrow. Yes, in the homes of the poor and neglected, she may go with the gospel message, and the gospel charity and comfort, and in the name of Jesus bind up the broken-hearted, give the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Look at Elizabeth Fry as she goes on her errands of mercy to prisons, to speak and read to the outcast criminals, and by her ministry of love seeks to touch their hearts with some remembered joy of innocence and childhood, or reading from God's word such passages as "Let



the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon," has awakened in the vilest prodigals by divine grace a true repentance, and then pointed them to that Savior who came to seek the lost, and who heard the prayer of the dying malefactor.

Think of *Dorothy Dix*, our American Mrs. Fry, exclaiming, "In a world where there is so much to be done, there must be something for me to do;" and then devoting her life to the insane and vicious. She has visited hundreds of maniacs in her sacred mission, and not one has she found, however turbulent and fierce, wholly insensible to the influences of religion. She has discovered the power of the religious sentiment over these shattered souls. Her quiet worship and loving heart affect the raving maniacs like a voice from heaven. They fall on their knees, and with clasped hands look upward, as if through the overhanging darkness they caught glimpses from their Father's throne and love. In hundreds of minds, dark and chaotic, has her gentle voice relumed the almost extinguished light of reason. What a glorious mission!

Woman has a noble sphere—at home and abroad. Man acts with greater noise and brilliancy in the eyes of the world, as he leads on marshalled hosts to the battles of Liberty; or when with impassioned eloquence he pleads

for the oppressed, or inspires the multitude with holy zeal, and leads them forth to noble deeds of philanthropy; but he does not achieve a greater work than woman, who fulfils the quiet duties of home, or goes along the shaded paths of misery to minister to the sick and dying, and gathers gems for the crown of her rejoicing from the very dregs of humanity.

And then more than we ordinarily suppose, even the achievements of man, of all that is great and good, are consequentially traceable to woman in some way. "A man discovered America; but a woman equipped the voyage." So, as justly remarked, it is everywhere; man executes the performance; but woman trains the man. Every effectual person leaving his mark on the world, "is but another Columbus, for whose furnishing some Isabella, in the form of his mother, lays down her jewelry, her vanities, her comfort."

In view of these high prerogatives of woman in all holy ministries of the affections, at home, and in the wide field of usefulness which Christianity has opened up to her loving heart, and her soft but resolute hand, well might our own admired Mrs. Sigourney ask, and with a conscious pride in the glory of her sex:

"Sisters, are not our rights sufficiently comprehensive — the sanctuary of home, the throne of the heart, the moulding of the whole mass of mind in its first formation? Have we not power enough, in all realms of sorrow and suffering — over all forms of want and ignorance — amid all

ministrations of love, from the cradle-dream to the sealing of the sepulchre?"

We are naturally led from this aspect of woman's sphere and mission to make some suggestions on

#### THE EDUCATION OF DAUGHTERS.

"That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."—DAVID.

"To her new beauty largely given  
From deeper fountains, looked and smiled,  
And, like a morning dream from heaven,  
The woman gleamed within the child."—STERLING.

We cannot say, in our day, what Fenelon said in his, that nothing is more neglected than the education of daughters. There are everywhere indications of an unusual interest upon this subject. Almost every town and village is adorned with seminaries of learning, crowded with the daughters of our land. This we regard as among the most hopeful signs of the times—symptomatic of an advancing civilization, and prophetic of the good days coming. In many respects we hail this increased attention to female education with more hope than the multiplication of colleges; for, as Fenelon says, "The education of women is more important than that of men, since the latter is always their work."

As the subject is merely collateral to the main design of this volume, we have space to offer only a few sug-



gestions, leaving them to the elaboration of the reader's own thoughts and reflections.

1. The first and most obvious suggestion is, that in the education of our daughters there should be special reference to the ordained sphere of woman — *home* and the affections, or the ministries which specially pertain to the affections.

“That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.”

This language of the Psalmist, freely interpreted, is sufficient to define the idea of female education. The figurative allusion or comparison of David suggests the idea of solidity and polish, the union of the useful and the graceful in the education of woman, such as will adapt her to the sphere in which she is to live and act, the support and the grace of social life.

The usual course of education in our female seminaries has been sanctioned by scholars of maturest judgment. It is substantially the course adopted in the education of young men. It is designed to give the fullest scope to the development of mind, leaving the feminine instincts and aptitudes to vindicate their own prerogatives.

A thorough education in the true acceptation of the term should be the essential thing, and what are styled the graces of education should be regarded as subordinate and of secondary importance. It is a great perversion of the true order of nature, to make accomplishments the main thing, as the result must be a polished vanity.

“Accomplishments are poor tricks, unless their polish is but the smoothness of substantial knowledge and judgment. A showy girl, who can dance, sing, and prattle two or three foreign languages, without being able to speak and write sensibly in her own tongue, is one of the most lamentable of counterfeits, and may chance to blight the peace and dignity of more hearts than one by her shams. She is the product of that flashy system of training, which is doing more mischief in America than any where else, and making society a tawdry Vanity Fair instead of a companionship of hearts and homes.”\*

It is painful to consider the low ideal which some parents set before their daughters as the grand object of their mutual aspiration. To be trained for beautiful brides, or centres of meretricious observation at summer watering-places, or to be admired in the giddy whirl of the dance, for graceful attitudes and flashing beauty—what an object of life is this! Who are taught to control their feelings and show off their accomplishments, and by artificial conventionalities become as heartless as waxen images with glass eyes; in whom the chaste enamel of nature and all the free blushes of native grace, have been polished off with the brush of artificial manners: “a living gewgaw, a doll made up of rouge, and musk, and lace, a frame to hang flounces on”—to go out into society to become smitten and enamored “by some mere popinjay and dandiprat in the other sex—a kind of

\* Osgood.

whiskered essence or organized perfume" — perchance to marry, and, after a shortlived excitement of vapid pleasure, to linger out a life of married imbecility and wretchedness.

Oh! it is sad to think of those who are to become wives and mothers in our homes, and who ought to be the mild conservators of pure morals and good manners in society, trained only to live in the whirl of excitement or sparkle in the ball-room, as mere airy bubbles, with their evanescent hues of beauty floating in the eddying circles of fashion and vanity, instead of polished stones, the supporters and adornments of domestic and social life!

Let it be the aim of those entrusted with female education at home, or in our seminaries of learning, to realize the ideal of the Psalmist, that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. That they may possess the substantial elements of education with special reference to their peculiar sphere in life. And in this prospective reference we include good house-keeping. This, however prosaic and homely it may seem to the fancy of sentimental young ladies, is nevertheless an important requisite in her education. It is among the fine as well as useful arts, and rightly viewed its very utilities, like the fountain of living water, sparkle into beauty. But they are not to be corner-stones, but polished after the similitude of a palace. Let every attention be paid to the culture of pure tastes, a refined imagination, and that natural grace of manner which will invest her true womanhood with the graces of refine



ment and social courtesy, as distinguishable from the mere ceremonial of studied manners, and the cold and artificial graces of fashionable life, as the dewy freshness and sparkling beauty of a spring morning, from the glittering frost-work of winter.

2. But all education apart from religion is abortive, as to the true aim and end of life. This is specially true of woman. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." "This is the brightest jewel in her crown."

In view of her sphere and mission, she pre-eminently needs the guidance and strength, the life and power of religion. In the opening bloom of life should she be found with Christ, and devote to Him the grace and power of her youthful enthusiasm. How can she be a polished corner-stone in the domestic temple, unless she is built upon Him who is the chief corner-stone?

She who is to stand as the central light and moral power of home—from whom immortal minds are to receive their first and most durable impressions in the plastic mould of childhood—she who in the initial school of human destiny is influentially to affect all social conditions—she of all others most needs the wisdom that is from above, and the grace of Christ to meet her responsibilities.

She is to take her place in society, and her spirit and moral attitude will, to a great extent, determine the moral atmosphere about her. If she does not frown upon and shrink from the touch of the libertine—if she allows a

fashionable exterior to excuse drunkenness, and “a mustachioed lip to consecrate profaneness, *she* is to blame if vice prevails in the community; and her responsibility in this respect is deeper than she may be aware.” But if she carries into society the chastened dignity and moral purity of a true woman, how much may she do to give tone not only to the manners but morals of the community! She becomes the advocate of every virtue, and the effectual reformer of every vice. How much, therefore, depends upon the religious education of woman! Let her learn early to sit at the feet of Jesus, whose deepest truth and inmost life were revealed to the sisters of Bethany. Then will she be prepared to fulfil her holy mission in society, in the church, and in the world. Then will “she stand in her household the priestess of an immortal faith, the reconciler of human law with the divine; then will she move among sons and daughters, folding the hands of infancy in prayer, joining the hands of all in fellowship, opening them in charity, and pointing with her own to heaven.”

“*She* can so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e’er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings.”

We conclude this subject with another *moral picture*

from the gospel, presenting a condensed illustration of woman's true position and mission.

THE MARYS ROUND THE CROSS.

“And there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.”

JOHN.

These pious females are round that cross, like serene and beautiful stars, shining in that darkest midnight of history. The scene illustrates what is most lovely in woman, and is a beautiful symbol of her true position. It is the light of the cross that has revealed more and more the true dignity of her office and the excellency of her nature. From that cross she derives her power, and goes forth on her mission and ministry of love.

The naturalness and touching simplicity of this by-scene in the Crucifixion authenticates the whole description of the Evangelist, as one caught from actual and passing life. Woman appears here in those traits which will always constitute her distinctive excellence and glory; traits which, while they gladden all the walks of life, unfold with peculiar beauty and power in scenes of trial and sorrow, demonstrating that her dominion is the affections, that it is pre-eminently her office to reveal the secret power there is in love. The loveliest phases of her character come out in the deepening shadows of life. With a delicacy and sensitiveness, which, like the *Æolian* harp, trembles at every breath of air, or the *mimosa* leaf,



which shrinks from the gentlest touch, she yet rises with heroic devotion and fortitude in scenes of calamity and desolation, and yields the sweetest and richest music in the fierceness of the storm. This is seen at the Cross. The eyes of Jesus, dim with death, turn from those faces of scorn and hatred to the looks of those tearful women, to the face of his mother. There he meets with a devotion more eloquent than words, and a love that cannot die. And Mary, the mother—how does the love that bent over the manger brighten even through the darkness that hung round the Mount of Crucifixion. And there, when man was false and cowardly, did woman linger, to mingle the tears of pity with the blood of suffering. There she stood by the dying Saviour; and went from the Cross to relume the “lamp of her devotion at the door of the sepulchre.”

“Last at his Cross, and earliest at his grave.”

With this scene before me, I say that woman's peculiar position is near the Cross—her sphere is with the affections, and in those relations which pertain to the affections. Her most potential influence is in the sphere of home. Here she acts in the relations of the *mother*, the *wife*, the *sister*, the *daughter*. To her belong the beautiful offices of love and mercy—in hours of sickness, in homes of pain and penury, in sleepless vigils beside the aged and the couch of the dying. And here she may shine with a royalty as supreme and glorious as any man in the halls of debate, or on the dazzling heights of ambition.

Let it be her highest aim to occupy well this sphere.

“Here woman reigns; the mother, daughter, wife,  
Strews, with fresh flowers, the narrow way of life—  
Around her *here*, domestic duties meet,  
And fireside pleasures gambol at her feet.”

And though she cannot now literally stand by the Cross of Jesus, and mingle her tears with the suffering Savior, she can go forth to diffuse His spirit in all her social relations, and fulfil her mission of mercy to the poor, the sick, and sorrowful. And thus, abiding in the work of faith and labor of love, she shall see Jesus glorified — she shall be blessed with the smile of his love and approval, even as the Marys of old by the Cross were blessed by his dying gaze.

### III.

#### HOME CARES, AND HEAVENLY PEACE.

“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.” — JESUS.

“And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard his word.” — LUKE.

“But Martha was cumbered about much serving.” — LUKE.

“Commit thy trifles unto God, for to him is nothing trivial.” —

TUPPER.

In ev’ry home there will be care,  
And trifles to annoy;  
But at the Savior’s feet in prayer,  
The heart finds rest and joy.

This scene in the home of Bethany—Martha cumbered about much serving, and Mary serene and happy at the feet of Jesus—illustrates an important phase in our

earthly homes. The two sisters appear, in this and two succeeding scenes, in their distinct moral features and marked personality. There is here only a casual lifting of the veil, and we catch but a passing glimpse; yet do Mary and Martha stand distinctly defined in our conceptions. The one, serene and happy; the other, anxious and bustling. The one living in the excitement of action; the other in the repose of thought. The one doing; the other aspiring. Martha cumbered about much serving; Mary devoutly sitting at the feet of Jesus, without a troubled thought or anxious care.

The quiet home of Bethany is the scene of unusual bustle and excitement at the unexpected coming of Christ and some of his disciples. Upon Martha, it seems, the duties of hospitality mainly devolved. She is anxious to give the honored guests a reception and an entertainment worthy of their distinction. Naturally excitable and impulsive, she loses the serenity of her mind, and is betrayed into a fretful, petulant mood, which overlooks the kindness due to her sister, and the veneration becoming her distinguished guest. With a temper ruffled and flushed with excitement, she abruptly enters the room where Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, and with a manner and language that implicated both the Master and Mary, says, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

To which her Lord responded in words so gentle and touching, yet rebuking her over anxiety, and commending



the devout aspirations of her sister — “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things :

“But one thing is needful ; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

#### MARTHA AND MARY.

The sacred writers never attempt a portraiture of persons. Even of Christ we have no labored description. Of these two sisters we have no formal portraits, and yet they look out upon us from this and two other scenes in the gospel with all the vividness of reality. Their moral features are familiar to us ; and we recognize them “as separate and as self-consistent in their individuality, as any two persons that we see about us every day.” In this scene, Martha, cumbered with cares, losing her self-possession, petulant, censorious, contrasts unfavorably with Mary, calmly sitting at the feet of Jesus. And yet both were the friends of Jesus and possessed of personal excellences ; but each represented a peculiar order of virtues. They represent, says one, two distinct types of character — of *womanly* character. The one is *practical*, the other devout and reflective.

Martha has been styled the female Peter — ardent, impulsive, practical. Her love to Christ is exhibited in her bustling activity to furnish an entertainment for her Lord, who was wearied with toils, and needed rest and refreshment. Her faults seemed to spring from her virtues. It was her intense solicitude for the entertainment of her

Lord, which betrayed her into that excessive anxiety and petulance of temper, that provoked the gentle rebuke of the Master: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." This timely rebuke made her conscious of the wrong tendency of her inordinate anxiety, inasmuch as her excessive solicitude had disturbed the spiritual equipoise of her mind, and that by her absorption in domestic cares she was really losing sight of the one thing needful. She appears in the subsequent scenes of the gospel narrative, with the same peculiarities of temperament and practical character, but greatly improved in the spirit and temper of her mind.

Mary differs from Martha in natural temperament, as well as in a more reflective order of mind. She is serene and meditative, with deep emotions and intense self-consciousness. She resembles John in the tenderness and intensity of her love to the Savior. Hence her attitude at the feet of Jesus in this scene, whilst the household is in commotion, and her sister is fretted with care. She forgets the material cares of the household in the aspirations of her soul for the spiritual and divine. She sits a charmed listener at the Master's feet, and sees nothing and cares for nothing beside her Lord, and the teachings that distilled, like the dew, from his lips. In her ideal of religion and spiritual vision, she seems to live in a sphere above the petty cares that disturb the equanimity of her sister, whose very enthusiasm of kindness seems tinged with a spirit of worldliness. In short, "Mary was one

of those characters who cause us to overlook what they do in the consideration of what they are. We are more impressed by her spirit than by her actions. She sat at the feet of Jesus, for her appropriate sphere was in the region of aspiration and receptivity. Her heart was a censer of devout breathings, and her whole being vibrated to holy influences like a harp. It seems to be the mission of such natures, not so much to act as to shine in their own calm brightness, like planets, reflecting upon us a light which has been poured into them from unseen urns. . . . While she lives her presence glides among us and makes us better; and when she dies we feel almost ready to say that she has not gone, but returned to heaven.”\*

This particular aspect of the home in Bethany, and the different attitudes of the sisters, under the same circumstances, illustrate the different phases of domestic cares and trials, as viewed from different points of spiritual vision —

“*Martha* is careful and troubled about many things. *Mary*, with a serene and peaceful spirit, sits at the feet of Jesus.”

This phase of the home-scene at Bethany leads us to consider the *cares* of domestic life, and the difference between earthly perplexity and heavenly peace, as represented by Martha and Mary.

\* Chapin.



## I.—HOME CARES.

“There is a cross in every sphere,  
And an earnest need of prayer;  
But the lowly heart that trusts in Thee,  
Is happy everywhere.”

The very scene before us suggests what is matter of universal experience, that in every home there will be cares and annoyances, which need the pacific power of religious faith; and further, that there is something in faith and devout communion with Jesus, which will diffuse a heavenly peace through the soul in the midst of the manifold cares and trivial disturbances that are incident to the happiest home-life.

We are not led now to speak of those cares which throng the busy thoroughfares of trade, that fever the brain of the merchant, or press with wasting anxiety on the professional man, or torture the slaves of Mammon and ambition, as they struggle for gold and power. But the picture before us conducts our thoughts to the quiet scenes of domestic life, to those anxious cares and trials and disquietudes which are found in every home, and which demand the endurance of faith, and patience of love.

There is a question of Job which is full of significance in its general reference to human life, but has a special application to home-cares, that are trivial, but of constant recurrence. He asks, “What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him, and set thine heart upon him; and that

thou shouldst visit him every morning, *and try him every moment?*”

This last clause, “tried every moment,” expresses the idea of domestic cares. The obvious meaning of the passage is not that we are continually afflicted, but that everything in the course of life and of every day touches our moral nature in the character of a spiritual discipline, is a trial of our temper and dispositions, and developes in us feelings that are either right or wrong. The very passing of time, and the alternations of the weather, often indicate by the feelings awakened the tone of our moral feelings, and develop in us much that is moral. “Yes, the idle watch-hand often points to something within us; the very dial-shadow falls upon the conscience.”

Let any one mark his interior history for one day, and see how much that is moral is developed in the process of the commonest routine of domestic life. How much depends upon the frame of mind in which the day is begun. If there is no devoutness in the early morn, how possible that in the very first acts—in the process of dressing and the toilet—something may fret the spirit and disturb the serenity of the soul, and gather a cloud in the morning that may overshadow the whole day. How possible is it that the adjustment of some article in the wardrobe—some slight neglect in the culinary preparations for the early meal—some annoyance from the servants—may ruffle the spirit in the early hours, disturb the equanimity, and touch the springs of the moral

nature, and thus give the spiritual hue and moral tone to your inner feelings and outward conduct for the whole day. Now all this may take place without our being distinctly sensible at the time that anything wrong has happened. The inner disturbance may be so slight as not to be matter of distinct consciousness, and yet it may not be the less real or influential in affecting the temper of our minds and the tenor of our conduct. "We are told that the earth and every substance around us is full of the electric fluid; but we do not constantly perceive it. A little friction, however, develops it, and it sends out a hasty spark. And so in the moral world, a slight chafing, a single turn of some wheel in the social machinery, and there comes a flashing glance of the eye, a hasty word, perhaps a muttered oath, that sounds ominous and awful as the tone of distant thunder! What is it that the little machinery of the electrical operator develops? It is the same power that, gathering its tremendous forces, rolls through the firmament, and rends the mountains in its might. And just as true is it that the little round of our daily cares and occupations, the humble mechanism of daily life, bears witness to that moral power which, only extended, exalted, enthroned above, is the dread and awful Majesty of the heavens."\*

In the case of Martha, it was not some great trial, some sudden shock of calamity, or insolent provocation,

\* Dewey's Human Life.



that disturbed the harmony of her soul, perplexed her with care, and gave her that censorious and petulant spirit; but the common duties of domestic life — a duty of every day occurrence — the preparation of a meal. It proves what we have just been saying, that these *little, daily household duties* are moral in their effects upon us — a moral discipline — and need the guiding and controlling influence of religious faith. And they need it the more for the very reason that they are little cares, and of constant recurrence. In great trials the spirit is roused to resistance and effort, and looks to God for help; whereas, in these trivial, ever-recurring cares the spirit is often relaxed and unguarded, and forgets to pray. These cares and toils of the household, under divine grace, nurture in us patience and strength, and even magnanimity; so that the very furniture of the parlor and implements of domestic labor become a part of the ordained instrumentality for our progress in moral perfection.

How many and diversified are the cares and troubles of domestic life!

1. Take the young wife, whose life in the paternal home has been one of comparative ease and exemption from care. She finds in her new position manifold duties and obligations for which she is but illy prepared. Amid the pressure of other and increasing cares, are added those of the mother for her first-born. Soon it starts up in her quiet path a being of will and passion. It is to be governed and taught submission to authority. Often she

is perplexed as to the course of duty. Sometimes there is painful conflict between the promptings of maternal affection, and the stern behests of duty. She is tried in her motherly sympathies, in her patience, and an unfaltering adherence to the convictions of duty, and nothing but the strength inspired by faith and prayer, can enable her to meet this moral crisis, and conduct it to happy issues. The maternal relation, with its responsibilities, has been considered in another chapter, and we simply allude to it here as one of the deepest sources of care and anxiety in domestic life.

But, if in addition to this care — that is in most cases inseparable from the family life — there should be any infelicity in the conjugal relation; if she is an unhappy wife, left to the loneliness of thought and the silence of neglect; if she wakes from the dreams of youthful love, and finds herself bound to a coarse and selfish husband, her affections repulsed, the bright visions of youth clouded, and her sad heart doomed to see one by one the ruin of her hopes, “the loss of all life’s golden links;” and if, as is sometimes the case, she is left to shame and desertion — left unbefriended and alone to bear up under the accumulated cares and heart-throes that shatter her feeble frame; oh! for such trials there is no refuge but in God! The heroes of history wear wreaths of fame about their bleeding brows; but who shall unfold the record of woman’s martyrdom, traced in tears, hidden in silence in many a desolate home? And how shall

she meet these wasting cares? With the perplexed, unbalanced mind of Martha, or the upward-looking, serene spirit of Mary?

Where can she find repose for her troubled spirit, or consolation for her saddened heart, if not with Mary at the feet of Jesus — in lowly communion with Him, who came to comfort all that mourn — to bind up the broken-hearted — and give the oil of joy for heaviness — and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

2. But apart from these extreme and melancholy instances of domestic trials — in every home — however well-conditioned in affectional harmony and external comforts, there will be cares and petty annoyances, trials of temper and patience.

Tupper says, “A well-assorted marriage hath not many cares.” It is true, that such a union will, by mutual forbearance and consideration, prevent “many cares,” but *some* will be inevitable, and though few, if not met and overcome by the spirit of faith and love, they may be enough to disturb the peace and harmony of home.

The sphere of woman is one of comparative isolation from the world. She dwells apart from the tumult and whirl of excitement which agitate the outer world. Her position and duties leave her much alone. Her life is one of introversion and self-companionship; she is therefore peculiarly sensitive to every change or care in the household, and needs an inner spring of life and self-reliance.

The home of Bethany was one of sisterly and brotherly



affection — and yet the unexpected arrival of guests demanding extra duties and culinary preparations, disturbed the equanimity of Martha, oppressed her with cares, that ruffled her feelings and led her into sins of temper and language, that received the rebuke of the Savior.

This scene illustrates the remark just made; even in well-regulated homes — homes of affection and religion — there will be occasions for the trial of temper and dispositions. There may be something in the opening day which will call for an act of self-command; the servants may be obstinate or perverse; some special direction has been forgotten; or they have done the very opposite of what you ordered; or some one of the household has upset or misplaced an article of furniture. The thing itself may be very trivial — but it has ruffled your feelings; and then the material consideration is that you lose your self-possession, and your temper is not what it should be. You are vexed or fretted, the fine tone of the spirit is disturbed, and, if of an impulsive temperament, that little jar may derange the whole domestic harmony — that spark of kindled passion may inflame the entire household; for it is a matter of fact that family discords usually originate in little things.

But we cannot particularize the manifold incidents, surprisals, disappointments, the complicated and interdependent workings of the household, the diversified calls of duty, the daily contact of different temperaments and independent wills, by which the delicate adjustments of home

may lose their harmony. How unexpected trials of temper, and conflict of will, may develop the hitherto latent passions of envy or jealousy, elicit the flashing eye and the angry word, which, by a law of moral repulsion, rebounds with the quick retort and the bitter sarcasm. And well if these harsh sounds do not invade the sanctuary of home. Well if they do not break the harmony of the social circle, and mar the music of loving hearts.

We now turn from Martha to Mary—from domestic cares and perplexity to

## II.—HEAVENLY REST.

“What nothing earthly gives or can destroy,  
The soul’s calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy.”

The outward attitudes of the two sisters in this moral picture, indicate their apparent spiritual stand-points in relation to household cares.

The one is troubled, petulant, censorious—the other is calm, self-possessed, with devout aspirations, sitting at the feet of Jesus. The scene thus becomes a pictorial representation of domestic cares and heavenly rest. They are both encompassed by the same circumstances, yet how differently are they affected. Martha is troubled about many things, fretted, petulant, losing her self-control, and betrayed into language and conduct as unsisterly as it was worldly and unchristian. Mary is serene and happy—her faith in Christ gives a central rest to her soul.

Let no one, as they look at this picture, at the hea-

venly calm of Mary amidst the bustle and excitement of domestic cares — imagine that her piety was too ideal, too spiritual ever to be realized amid the material activities of common life. Nor are we to infer from her quiet posture at the Savior's feet, while Martha is busy and burdened with household duties, that she was indifferent to the common affairs of home, and neglected the practical obligations of life. This would be as false to the true ideal of female piety as unjust to the real character of Mary. The true interpretation of this scene leads us to infer that there was an elementary difference in these two sisters, indicated by the activity of the one, and the spiritual repose of the other. The piety of Martha, even if as great as that of Mary, would still manifest itself in active service. You perceive this radical difference in the last gospel-scene in which they are brought before us. About a week before the crucifixion we find Jesus and Lazarus and the two sisters at a social meal in the house of Simon the Leper. Both of the sisters were filled with thankfulness, and both expressed their gratitude; but how different the method of its manifestation — the one in the bustling service of a feast, the other in the silent fragrance of the ointment. You see in the one a matter-of-fact nature, full of energy and activity; and in the other an ideal, contemplative nature, a devout, aspiring soul, seeking some rich symbol to express her deep and yearning affection, and leaving that precious ointment, poured upon the feet of Jesus as an ever-



lasting memorial of her piety —filling not only Simon's house with its odor, but the whole world with the sweeter fragrance of her heavenly devotion; for, said Christ, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached, throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her."

With this radical difference of temperament in the two sisters, even the grace of God would not make them alike, any more than that grace would transform a Peter into a John, or a Luther into a Melanchthon. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." Recognizing this elementary difference in Martha and Mary, we expect to find them in the very attitudes in which they appear in the several scenes in the gospel — Martha always active and serving, Mary always meditative, sitting at the feet of Jesus. And if both were equally possessed of the spirit of Christ, these different attitudes would have been equally acceptable to the Lord. Martha was not rebuked for her attention to household affairs, but because in her over anxiety she lost the equanimity of her mind, and by too much absorption in family cares she was actually losing sight of the one thing that is needful.

Mary was not commended for her seeming neglect of domestic duties, but because she recognized higher obligations, and kept these family affairs in their true and subordinate position, and performed them in their appropriate season, with a sanctified will and in the clear vision of faith. In this instance she did not so much neglect

her domestic duties, as suspend their pressure to yield to nobler impulses and the call of higher obligations. The privilege of sitting at the Master's feet was too precious to be lost for material cares; she could well dispense with these inferior claims whilst listening to Him who could solve the great problems of life, and satisfy the aspirations of her soul after truth and righteousness. That she was right in this course was evidenced by the commendation of her Lord — "Mary hath chosen that good part."

This scene shows that the anxious care and perplexity of Martha, and the heavenly calm of Mary, are attributable to their relative spiritual proximity to the Savior.

If, like Martha, we are so busied with social duties, or out-door business, that we take no time to commune with Christ in prayer, where we may get the true perspective of duty, and the true inspiration of life, then, like her, we shall be cumbered with much serving. Then we shall be careful and troubled about many things. Away from Christ we shall lose the spiritual equanimity of our souls, and fall into diverse temptations that will entangle us in doubt and perplexity, if they do not excite unholy tempers, and petulance, and fretful irritation, so inimical to all spiritual repose and heavenly peace.

But if, like Mary, we abide with Christ, we shall possess her composure and peace amidst the turbulence of outward cares. If, like Mary, you sit at the feet of Jesus in the opening morn, and listen to the words which, of old, fell from his lips, and imbibe his spirit, you will feel a

divine life within you sanctifying the heart, controlling the conduct, quickening the spirit, clothing your deportment with a divine beauty, and the evening will close around you with a heavenly benediction. If you keep near the Savior, not in the bodily attitude of Mary, but spiritually within the inspiration of his presence, you will realize the fulfilment of his promise to the disciples. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Yes, in Christ by faith you will have a central repose, a divine life; you will dwell in the world, awake to the call of every domestic and social duty, responding to every sympathy, and yet dwell all the while in heaven, as Jesus reposed in the home at Bethany, while he dwelt also in the bosom of God. Then, while all without may storm, there will be peace within, though many and pressing claims throng your quiet path, you will be able to meet them in the strength of faith and patience of love. And the inevitable cares and perplexities of domestic life that agitate the Marthas, will pass over your serene spirit like summer storms, that ruffle the surface of the sea, but do not reach the calm repose of the waters beneath. And you can say from your own happy experience —

"These surface troubles come and go  
Like ruffings of the sea;  
The deeper depth is out of reach  
To all, my God, but Thee."



Let your mind be as prompt to meet every household duty as Martha, and your heart as ready and generous to welcome and entertain your Christian friends, and even strangers; "but let faith, like Mary, abide in the innermost shrine of the heart, calmly sitting at Jesus' feet."

To how many in every department of life, might the Savior's rebuke of Martha be addressed! How many are so absorbed with the claims of business, the cares of the household, or the mere frivolities of the world, as to overlook the momentous interests and destiny of the soul! Who, in their phrensied pursuit of mere shadows,

"Push eternity from human thought,  
And smother souls immortal in the dust!"

In the whirl of these busy cares and troubled thoughts, that leave no time to sit at the feet of Jesus, pause for a moment, and ask yourselves, what will be the result of these restless days and nights, and of this unceasing occupation, which exclude all care of the soul! What will remain of them all in a dying hour, and in the unseen world? "Whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?" "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Oh! ponder this solemn question. Mr. Jay, in one of his sermons, gives the following illustration of the folly and madness of those who, in their anxiety for the world, lose their souls.

"I have somewhere read of a fire, that happened in

some portion of our country; and an individual who had been extremely busy in rescuing the furniture from the house, remembering in an instant that she had left her child in the cradle, ran back again in order to secure the infant, but found that the flames had already encircled it, and that she could not approach it; and she came out again to the multitude, wringing her hands, and exclaiming, "I have saved my goods, but I have lost my child!" Oh! if it should be the case with you, that at the great day you should say — 'I have saved my property, but I have lost my soul; I have saved my honor and my reputation, but I have lost my soul!' Great God! what a loss that would be to any one of you!"

The mother, who would save the cradle, and leave the sleeping infant to perish in the flames, is but a faint type of the madness which leads a man to provide for the body and time, but neglects the soul and eternity. For the body is but the material wrappage of the soul; the longest time to man on earth, compared with eternity, is like a drop of water on the finger's end to the measureless sea; and the world itself is but the cradle in which the infant soul, in swaddling-bands, is rocked for immortality. And, Oh! the moral madness, the frantic desperation, to wake up in the future, with the in-flashing consciousness, that in your care for the body and the world you have lost your soul, and filled your eternity with fire!

Oh! listen to those words of Jesus, to Martha, and to

you. "Thou art careful and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful."

It is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. It is to secure by faith, in Jesus, the forgiveness of sin, and thus a title to heaven ; and by personal holiness, through sanctification of the spirit, to be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is like Mary, to choose that good part which shall not be taken away from you.

Let this be the first great and absorbing concern of life. Let it be to you the *one* thing needful ; and let everything else be made subservient to religion and the soul. Let all other cares and toils be comparatively lost in the one great thought and care, how you may save your soul and glorify God —

"How make your own election sure ;  
And when you fail on earth, secure  
A mansion in the skies."

Mary is still in the presence of the Savior. Eighteen hundred years have rolled away since she went up from the home of Bethany to her Father's house in heaven ! And still she worships and sings before the Lamb, in the midst of the throne ; for she chose that good part which shall never be taken from her. And Martha has long exchanged her cares and toils on earth for the sweet repose of heaven ; "but her active mind, and heart, and hands,

'Find sweet employ  
In that eternal world of joy.'"



## IV.—DOMESTIC AFFLICTIONS.

“O deem not they are blest alone,  
Whose lives a peaceful tenor keep;  
The Power who pities man has shown  
A blessing for the eyes that weep.”

“Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick. . . . Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”

We have gone in our meditations to the home of Bethany, when reposing in unclouded sunshine, serene and happy in affectional union, and blessed with the presence of Jesus. But how changed is now the scene! The light that sunned their peaceful home is obscured by sorrow. The hearts so light and joyous, singing hymns and spiritual songs, until the old homestead was resonant with the praises of God, are now sad and silent in the bitterness of grief. But yesterday all was bustle and excitement in the entertainment of unexpected but welcome guests; now all is hushed in the quiet vigils of the sick-room, succeeded by the profounder silence of the grave. Alas! it is but the picture of human life, in its quick alternations of joy and sorrow, of life and death! For in every age and country our sorrowing humanity has echoed the plaintive sentiment of the old man on the banks of Ayr—

“I’ve seen yon weary winter sun  
Twice forty times return;  
And every time has added proofs  
That man was made to mourn.”

This home-scene, in its visitations of sickness and sorrow, and the bow of peace which spanned the heavens as the clouds were passing away, is a touching illustration of home-life in its afflictive vicissitudes, and the consolation and joy which Christ gives to the stricken but believing heart. "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." The subject is systemized naturally in the historical order: *Sickness—Death, and the Consolation.*

I.—*Sickness in the Home of Bethany.*

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany."

JOHN.

"A life all ease is all abused;—

O precious grace! that made thee wise  
To know—affliction rightly used  
Is mercy in disguise."

As we look abroad upon this world, replenished with the divine bounty, and full of beauty and gladness, we meet everywhere with the sad traces of sin and death. It does, indeed, seem strange to our earlier contemplation of life, that in a world of so many happy homes and holy altars, of sacred friendships and communions and devout aspirations, there should be the blighting touch of sorrow; that in such a world, and beneath the bright skies, there should be the dark stroke of calamity—a serpent winding through the Eden of our existence.

Stranger still does it seem that over this home of

Bethany there should pass such deep shadows of sadness and gloom. Surely that home, so beautiful in affection, where Jesus loved to linger after the toils of the day, and in whose genial sympathy and kindly ministrations his weary and saddened heart was refreshed and cherished — surely this spot, if any on earth, shall be kept from the blight of sin and sorrow! But no; we see sickness there, and those hearts so warm and sensitive, so full of gushing tenderness, are sad with watchings and anxious fears; and death enters there and rends those clasping ties of affection, and leaves that once happy home shrouded in the gloom and silence of the grave.

What we see in this family is but a type of all other homes in their exposure to the evils consequent upon sin. Whatever may be the philosophical speculations about sin, or the often fanciful theories explanatory of our connection with the primeval transgression which “brought death into the world with all our woe,” the fact of our implication, in some way, in that sin and its consequents no man in his senses can question. The fact is asserted by divine revelation and confirmed by the experience of mankind in all ages and countries. “Wherefore,” says Paul, “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” How sad are the memorials of this fact everywhere! O if the veil could be lifted from every place of our suffering humanity, and the countless homes of physical suffering, and mental anguish, with the moan of breaking hearts,



could send up their sighs and groans into the great hearing of the world, the world would stand aghast at the dread revelation — a revelation at which “man’s historian, though divine, might weep!”

The scene before us is a simple and touching picture of domestic afflictions — a picture, not sketched by the fancy, but drawn from real life. It serves to illustrate an important phase of the family life — one of personal and touching interest to every home-circle.

It suggests, first of all, that no family, however happy in mutual devotion, or blessed with the conscious love and favor of God, can expect any special exemption from the afflictions that are common to our humanity. But it at the same time indicates the cheering fact that sickness and sorrow come to the Christian home winged with mercy, and in the affecting details of the story we have a beautiful illustration of the design and issue of our suffering and discipline here — “the trying of our faith,” that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” and that though “weeping may endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning.”

“Heaven but tries our virtues by affliction,  
And oft the cloud which wraps the present hour  
Serves but to brighten all our future days.”

We are led to consider this domestic scene, in its afflictions and consolation, in their consecutive order, according to the facts of the history.

1. "*Lazarus was sick.*" What fears and trembling solicitude hover around the couch of sickness, when the sick one is a beloved member of the household, and the sickness assumes a fatal type and tendency. Both of these elements of solicitude existed in this case. It was Lazarus who was sick, an only brother, the central stay of the family, the only earthly object of his sisters' affection, and whom, in the absence of all other ties of kindred, they clasped to their hearts with an intensity of affection almost idolatrous; and it was a dangerous sickness, alike fatal and speedy in its termination. Under these circumstances, we can imagine the anxious fears and sleepless vigils of the sisters beside the couch of their only brother. How would Martha, with characteristic activity, provide every delicacy that might tempt his morbid appetite, and by manifold attentions of kindness seek to alleviate his sufferings and smooth his fevered pillow! And how would Mary sit by his side like a ministering angel, and by her devout spirit and gospel words seek to turn the current of his thoughts to Christ and heavenward, and thus minister a spiritual balm to his soul, diffusing a heavenly peace through his heart! Happy the sickness that is blessed with such ministrations of sisterly love and sympathy!

But Lazarus grew worse. Watching every change in the disease, they discover with the intuitive quickness of affection, what seemed symptomatic of a fatal tendency, and awakened the most painful apprehensions. How natural for

these lonely sisters, in such an emergency, to turn their fearful and troubled hearts to the Savior. They knew his power to heal the sick, and how readily he responded to the call of pity, even from strangers. They knew that he cherished for their little household a peculiar friendship, and if apprized of their affliction, they felt assured that he would hasten to their help and relieve their painful apprehensions. With these thoughts and convictions they sent unto Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." The form of this message, so spiritual and touching, we have no doubt was conceived by Mary. She does not plead—as one less spiritual would have done—that Lazarus loved *Him*, and was so devoted to his cause, and therefore He should come and heal him. No, she pleads His love for Lazarus as the reason why he should come. She knew that human love was too imperfect, too flickering and transient, to be made the basis of any petition to God. But, in pleading the Savior's love for Lazarus, she touches the deepest sympathy and motive spring, in behalf of her suffering brother—"He whom *Thou* lovest is sick." And then she does not say—"Come and cure him." No, she simply informs him of the fact, and leaves it to his love to pursue such a course, in reference to her sick brother, as he might deem best. What a high tone of spirituality and faith is indicated in this message! What an implied acquiescence in the divine will, antecedently to any expression of his purposes;



as if she had formally said, whether my brother shall live or die, I know not, but, Thy will be done.

When this message was sent, the sisters breathed more freely, for an oppressive weight was taken from their burdened hearts. Now the Master knows that Lazarus is sick, he will hasten to our help, and all will yet be well.

With this hope they wait for his coming. They watch the face of their brother, his languid eye and fading cheek; and, as he grows more feeble, and seems to be sinking, how they look out and listen, and fancy that they hear his approaching footsteps, and those familiar tones of kindness. But still he comes not. Now to their thoughts would come visitings of doubt and suspicion, to heighten the pains of suspense. What is the meaning of all this? Have we mistaken his friendship? Is our confidence in him a dream, a fond delusion? If not, why does he not come at the call of our distress. Ah! what hours of painful suspense and gloomy doubts, which almost strike from underneath the rock of their trust. How do they, with intense feelings, pray that the flickering life might linger till *He* came, who was able to save even from the gate of death. Slow and feverish pass the moments, but no Savior comes. The last ray of hope is fading; the dreaded hour has come; the trembling suspense is *broken*; *Lazarus is dead!*

Oh! what gloom enshrouds that once happy home! What desolation! But, the darkest stroke, the deepest

touch in this affliction, was the seeming indifference of the Savior to the sorrowing hearts of the sisters.

It does seem strange, even to us, that after hearing that Lazarus was sick, Jesus remained two days in the same place. To the sisters it must have seemed as the most cruel indifference. That He, who loved to linger in their home when all was bright and happy, should determinately absent himself when that home was dark with trouble; that He, to whom they had ministered in kindness, should be deaf to their cry of distress, was indeed mysterious. But wait, and this dark cloud will pass away, and all will be plain.

What the Savior said concerning the design of this affliction, "that it was for the glory of God," is not only explanatory of his seeming insensibility to the appeal of the sorrowing sisters, but a general interpretation of the ways of Divine Providence, which, to "our weak, erring sight," are often mysterious. It illustrates that in this, as in every similar dispensation, God has some designs of mercy to his people in their afflictions. To his people, it is always true, that —

"Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face."

How changed is this scene of domestic affliction, as we look at it in the light of this declaration of Jesus; the dark cloud over the home in Bethany is full of mercy, and will break in blessings on their heads.

“This sickness is. . . . for the glory of God.”

This was realized in relation to those more immediately affected by the visitation — Lazarus and his sisters.

“Verily, from others’ griefs are gendered sympathy and kindness ;  
Patience, humility, and faith, spring not seldom from thine own.”

*Lazarus* was no doubt blessed by his sickness and transient visit to the unseen world. From the intimate connection and sympathy between the soul and body, whatever affects the one must in some way be felt by the other. And often the sickness of the body is made conducive to the health of the soul. Some of the hidden processes of this beneficent action we do not know. Other methods by which this end is accomplished are obvious and tangible.

The physical prostration, the languor and depression of the bodily powers and morbid sensibilities, inducing a total inaptitude for the accustomed pleasures of the world—how such a condition makes palpable to the sick man the utter insufficiency of carnal pleasures, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life!” How the idols of the senses, “wooed, embraced, enjoyed, fall from his arms abhorred!” How wasting sickness, when pleasures lose their power to please, takes the false glitter from gold and ambition, and reveals the vanity of the world, and the utter insipidity of carnal enjoyments. It is good, amidst the factitious glare of the world,



and the fascination of the senses, to have the realization of these things as they appear on a sick bed. And then, in addition to the mellowing influence of disease, there is that isolation from the world peculiarly favorable to a calm vision of spiritual things. The invalid is left comparatively alone; and, in the stillness of the sick chamber, there is time for the introversion of his mind, and communion with himself. And, often in the quietness of meditation, there come thoughts of the past and the future, of God and eternity. Truths that were repulsed in the buoyancy of health are pondered in sickness, and lips unused to the words of devotion are opened in prayer. Whilst writing, a letter is handed to me from a distant friend, and the following extract from it is a practical illustration of what has just been said—"Dear Friend:—Some months ago I received a little volume from you, which, with a note accompanying it, was evidently intended to turn my attention to holy things. I read them, but forbore to acknowledge them, lest you should press me more upon the subject." After stating that, since then he had been laid upon a bed of sickness, he proceeds to say—"Now I invite your assistance to show me the way that leads to eternal life, that I may be prepared for either life or death." So it is with many.

We read in the gospel that, when they brought to Christ one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, He took him aside from the multitude and healed him. This seems typical of the divine method in healing. The

thoughtless sinner is isolated from the multitude, and Christ speaks to him the saving word in the solitude of the sick chamber. And many can attest from personal experience that their sickness has been blessed to their souls, and gratefully unite in saying with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word."

"Father, I bless thy gentle hand!  
How kind was thy chastizing rod,  
That forced my conscience to a stand,  
And brought my wandering soul to God."

But Lazarus *was* a *good* man; then his sickness was designed for his higher sanctification. It is important the good should be made better, as well as that the bad should be reformed. He was no doubt sanctified by this sickness. In that quiet home, unmolested by the busy world, happy in the affectionate devotion of his sisters, he may have needed this very disturbance of the even tenor of his life, this waking up of the repose of his spiritual nature, and quickening of his Christian graces. Besides, as he does not appear to have been much engaged in the public services of his Master, it may be he was called by meekness and patience in suffering to glorify God. It is probable that both these ends were subserved by his sickness—"For," says Christ, "every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." As a child of God, Lazarus no doubt realized that disease and affliction are but altered forms of mercy, ordained for a

blessed ministry — that physical debility is sent to establish the soul in firmer health and fuller strength, to shed into it the peace of God and spirit of heaven. And in the revision of this afflictive Providence, conscious of the blessed fruits that remained, he could say with grateful fervor, “It was good for me that I have been afflicted.”

*The Sisters* shared in the blessings of this affliction. The sickness was both a personal and relative blessing. It called into exercise those quiet and social virtues that so beautify the chamber of sickness. How the sick one evolves the affections, intensifies kindred feelings, and becomes for the time the central bond of unity in the household! How would these sisters, in their sleepless vigils and ministry of kindness to their sick brother, be schooled in all that pertains to patience, and hope, and sympathy, and thus become perfected in their Christian graces and spiritual character. Perhaps they needed this painful touch of the Father’s hand to perfect their Christian character. They may have leaned too dependently upon that only brother, and they must learn by this afflictive dispensation not to repose too exclusively upon an arm of flesh. In the absence of all other domestic ties, they may have loved Lazarus with an almost idolatrous affection, and their love must be chastened. They could no doubt testify, as the result of their experience in this affliction, that although “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless after-



wards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby.”

But that sickness, in its fatal termination, was to be instrumental for good beyond the household. Jesus said to the disciples — “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe.”

It would give occasion for such manifestations of his divine power, as would confirm their faith and glorify God. So that Christ did not linger at a distance through indifference, or want of sympathy with the afflicted family in Bethany, but to secure higher ends than they could see. There was a wisely-adjusted scheme of Providence, hidden and mysterious, that was evolving light from darkness, and beautifully elaborating from the very elements of death the clearer manifestations of life and immortality. How impressively does the sequel of this affecting story impress upon us the duty, in every mysterious providence, to stand still and see the salvation of God.

“His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour:  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.”

Lest we should anticipate what appropriately belongs to the next and darkest *phase* of this *Home-scene*, we invite you to go with us again to Bethany, now the house of mourning.

II. — *Death in the Home of Bethany.*

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.”

“Jesus was there but yesterday. The prints  
Of His departing feet were at the door;  
His ‘Peace be with you!’ was yet audible  
In the rapt porch of Mary’s charmed ear;  
. . . . . Yet, within  
The family by Jesus loved were weeping,  
For Lazarus lay dead.”

Over that bright home there has come a sudden and overshadowing cloud. Who can picture to his thoughts the sad and silent household, without being touched with sympathy for those lovely sisters beside the couch of death? It was their only brother—to whom, in the absence of parents and friends, their hearts were attached with all the tenderness and confiding helplessness of sisterly affection—one who was to them more than all the world beside—in whom they had treasured up the golden drops of life. They had sat by his sick-bed in anxious vigils, and though the symptoms were serious, hope whispered to their troubled fears that surely a kind Providence would spare their only earthly stay; that surely one so essential to the very existence of their home—one so young and so good, must be spared to them. But alas! how true, in the experience of many sorrowing hearts, the touching sentiment of Wordsworth, that the brightest lights are often the first to be quenched; that

“The good die first;

And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
Burn to the socket.”

Still in the alternations of hope and fear they watched beside their languishing brother. In trembling expectancy did they wait for the coming of Jesus, who could relume the flickering spark of life. But no Savior came. The moment from which in dim prospect they had recoiled with terror has come—the dreaded blow has fallen, and they bend in tearless grief and silent agony over the cold and lifeless form of their brother.

“Lazarus is dead!”

“That form which love had whispered would be last  
To greet their dying vision, cold and still  
In death is laid. The hand which they had cherished  
Would return no pressure. Those lips which cheered  
Were closed in marble stillness, and gave back  
No fond caress!”

Who can realize the anguish of the stricken sisters, with their crushed hearts and hopes, as they stood beside that lifeless form? Or picture the dark, cold shadows of utter desolation that settled upon that home, in the first shock of the dread reality! None but those

“Who from their hearts  
Have released friends to heaven. The parting soul  
Spreads wing betwixt the mourner and the sky!  
As if its path lay, from the tie last broken,  
Straight through the cheering gateway of the sun;  
And, to the eye strain’d after, ’tis a cloud  
That bars the light from all things.”

And then came the last parting with the loved form, though dead. They take the last look, and bear to the



tomb all that was left of their departed brother. They return to a home from which the light and joy are gone. Alas ! to them their home is drear and desolate !

“ They had been oft alone  
When Lazarus had followed Christ, to hear  
His teachings in Jerusalem ; but this  
Was *more* than solitude. The silence now  
Was void of expectation.”

The first outgushing of grief subsides into the deeper and more oppressive gloom of desolation. After the excitement of the funeral ceremonies are over, all is quiet in the house of mourning ; but it is the melancholy stillness of the calm, darkly brooding over the wrecks of the recent storm.

But let us withdraw from that shadowed home of grief. There is a sorrow, as well as a joy, with which the stranger should not intermeddle. There is a sacredness in such sorrow, that shrinks from the public eye. We would not, if we could, lift the veil which the sacred historian has thrown over these agonized sisters in their lonely sorrow.

Not long, we feel assured, will the Master leave them to mourn, un comforted. Not long, will *He*, who loved the home, which had so often welcomed him to its peaceful bosom, leave it enshrouded in gloom. Soon will He come, “ who turneth the shadow of death into the morning.” Soon will be heard. Lo ! the Master cometh ; and on his lips are the words of life and immortality

III. — *Light in the Home of Bethany.*

“There is a day of sunny rest,  
For every dark and troubled night,  
And grief may hide an *evening* guest,  
But joy shall come with *early* light.”

“And Martha, called Mary her sister, secretly saying, the Master is come and calleth for thee.”—JOHN.

“When I bring a cloud over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud.”—GENESIS.

The dark cloud is passing from the home in Bethany; and, true to what was symbolized in the ancient token and promise, we see upon the disc of the retiring storm the beauteous bow, the token of God’s everlasting covenant with his people.

The meeting of Christ with the bereaved sisters, the outburst of their grief, the sublime and thrilling words uttered by Jesus in an hour when “bereavement, dimmed with tears and fainting with sorrow, was sighing for help more than human;” the gathering at the tomb, the son of God in tears, the resurrection word, the coming forth of Lazarus, all constitute a moral picture, simple, touching, sublime, without a parallel, in literature sacred or profane. We almost fear to attempt any expansion of the simple scene, lest by an unskilful touch we should mar its beauty, or break the power of its moral grandeur and im-

pressiveness. Before saying a word upon this touching interview, we would ask you to look at the affecting scene, as it appears in its simple beauty and unconscious sublimity on the sacred page.—(John xi, 19–45.)

“And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house.

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee.

Jesus said unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.



As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

Jesus wept.

Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days.

Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

And I know that thou hearest me always : but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes ; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto him, Loose him, and let him go.

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."

We notice the *meeting*, the *words* of *Jesus*, to the bereaved sisters, and the *resurrection* scene.

1. *The Meeting*.—Four days had passed since the death of Lazarus. Lonely and desolate is the house at Bethany. The dead is buried ; but grief lives, and the hours pass in silent agony. The neighbors from the village come to sympathize with the bereaved sisters, and many friends from Jerusalem are with them to comfort them concerning their brother. Grateful to their pained affections were these tokens of kindness and the sympathy of friends. But there was little in all this to break the midnight gloom that was over their home and hearts.

At length the Master approaches. Martha, with her characteristic activity, first hearing of his coming, goes out to meet him. After a short interview, she returns to

Mary, saying, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." And Mary instantly goes out to meet him.

Though, in their apprehension, he had come too late, still is he met with the most cordial welcome. He had not responded to their earnest appeal; but they never question his friendship or suspect his goodness. But as the sick chamber, with its anxious fears and hopes, and thoughts of their departed brother, all come crowding upon their minds, they give vent to their painful and conflicting emotions in the same outburst of feeling—"Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." What natural and living truth is there in this simple trait of feeling! Many had been the dying whom his touch, his word, had given back to life; and, had he stood by the bedside of his expiring friend, the tomb would have remained unopened. So thought the sisters.

And is not this the language of our common nature, mingling its vain regrets with the resignation of sincere and simple faith. It is the experience of many in seasons of bereavement. If this or that had been done—if this or that physician had been called—if some other course had been adopted—the blow might have been averted. How that emphatic *if*, adds to the afflictive blow by diverting the mind from the primal source of our afflictions, and bewildering the heart in the labyrinthine maze of second causes, which no mortal can thread, and in which no soul of man ever found repose. And was it not, in the case of the sisters, a sad delusion, growing out of their



defective views of the power and providence of God. For Christ had purposely brought about the very contingency named by the sisters. He knew that Lazarus was sick, and for that very reason lingered on his way to Bethany — waited for him to die. And all this, not from any want of sympathy or kindly regard for the sorrowing sisters, but to secure higher ends of the Divine administration; it was essential to the religious nurture and elevation of that very family, that Lazarus should die. And when all the mystic folds of that providence were opened, how would those sisters—with a more living faith and a richer experience of the divine love—thank God that Christ was not there, and that Lazarus had been left to die.

This touching experience of the sisters is a beautiful illustration of the promise, “that all things work together for good, to those that love God.” It shows that in the most complicated scenes of trial there is divine order, working out the happiest issues.

“Thy hand, O God, conducts unseen,  
The beautiful vicissitude.”

Let us learn never to despair. Whatever mystery may encompass our path—whatever contingencies may seem to mock our prayers and disappoint our hopes, until our hearts tremble with gloomy thoughts and fears—still let us trust and wait. He leads us through deep waters; but their baptism is that of the Holy Spirit. His waves and billows may go over us, but they bear our souls nearer to

their heavenly rest. The outward he makes subservient to the inward, the body to the soul, time to eternity. Whatever, then, may be the source of your fear or despondency, say with David — “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

The first interview with Jesus is characteristic of the two sisters. With Martha the mourning was more of a sudden outburst of feeling; with Mary it was a deeper and an intenser sorrow, and therefore a more quiet and lasting grief, seeking silence and seclusion. The language of both is the same, as they met Jesus — “Lord, if thou hadst been here.” But see how differently they are affected by the same exclamation. Martha, after this first expression of her feelings, seems to enter into conversation with the Savior with entire composure and self-possession. But Mary, with her sensitive and impassioned nature, is more profoundly stirred by her sorrow, and from excessive feeling can neither speak nor reason. With that outgushing of her heart, “Lord, if thou hadst been here,” &c., she sank in speechless sorrow at his feet.

3. And how beautifully does the Savior adapt himself to the peculiar temperament of the sisters. To Martha, who is self-possessed and seeks for some words of consolation, He utters those sublime and thrilling words, “I am the resurrection and the life” — “thy brother shall rise again.” To Mary, who is too absorbed with her grief for

words, he gives nothing but sympathy ; it was all she was prepared to receive ; it was all she needed. “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping . . . he groaned in spirit and was troubled.” To Mary this silent sympathy was more than all spoken words. With Martha Jesus reasoned ; with Mary He wept. How suggestive is this to those who are called to minister to the bereaved. The same method and words of consolation are not suited alike to all. With some we may reason as Jesus did with Martha, and speak the promises ; whilst to others we can only give our silent sympathy and tears.

2. *The Consolation.*—“Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.” (JESUS.) Few can read this record of the conversation of Jesus with the sorrowing sisters, and of the scene at the grave of Lazarus, without an increasing faith and a profounder reverence. Jesus appears in all the gentle sympathies of his humanity, and in all the moral majesty of the Godhead. We ponder every word of that interview of the Savior with the sisters of Bethany—a season no less memorable for the unfolding of his heart than for its stupendous miracle of omnipotent mercy. Thanks be to God for those words that have unsealed the grave and unveiled the future ; that the omnipotent fiat has swept over the valley of death in the sight of the living ; that the long procession of the dying has been met and turned back by the Lord of Life !

To these mourning sisters Christ uttered words of consolation—precious words of life and immortality ; words



in which gleamed the hope of the reunion of kindred saints in glory.

1. "Thy brother shall rise again." This met the special want of the questioning Martha. She believed in the resurrection of the body; it was an article of the national creed. But the belief of a general resurrection did not meet the yearning of a heart that wept for an only brother. However cheering to individual expectation, it was not enough for bereaved affection. It was to such sorrow, one of the bitterest in the world — that of a sister left alone in the world — that Jesus speaks; and He says, "Thy brother shall live again."

"Thy brother shall live again." This was comfort to the sorrowing sister. Thy brother shall rise again — thy brother! Not some undefined and spiritual substance shall be eliminated from the chaos and gloom of the grave — not some new and strange being shall go forth from the tomb; "but life — life, in its character, its affections, its spiritual identity, such as it is here: thy brother shall rise again." He is not lost to thee; he shall not be so spiritually transformed, or commingled with the hosts of the redeemed, as to elude the recognition of sisterly affection. In that happy world you shall find him again — find thy brother! O blessed revelation! our loved ones, who have died in Jesus, not only live, but we shall know them, and be with them evermore. And there shall be a glorious fellowship of Christian kindred with one another and with Jesus forever!

But full as this assurance was of comfort and of glory, it did not fully satisfy Martha; it was too dim and distant. Her heart in its troubled grief yearned for something near and tangible. There seemed to float in her thoughts some undefined hope that her Lord might, even *then*, interpose his power and restore the departed brother. And with this hope trembling in her heart she says, "I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." To this suggestion the Savior does not reply; he does not tell her whether her brother shall immediately come back to her; but utters himself in a more general and a grander truth.

2. In addition to the inexpressible comfort and hope already given, the Savior says to Martha, in tones of majesty, uttered with the most solemn and joyous emphasis, "*I am* the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Martha had expressed her belief in a general resurrection at the last day; but she seemed not to associate this resurrection with Jesus as the cause and the agent. The Redeemer therefore gathers, as it were, and merges the general resurrection into Himself, and says, "*I am* the resurrection and the life."

What words are these, to be uttered in a world of the dying, amidst the wrecks of time, the memorials of buried generations! What words for those weeping sisters, and for our weeping humanity in all times, yearning for some

heaven-sent voice to break the silence of the grave, and speak of life among the sleeping dead!

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” That is, says an eloquent writer, he that believeth in me, receiveth me — hath the spirit, the spiritual life that is in me — is already living an immortal life. He shall never die. That in him which partakes of my inward life, shall never die. It is essentially immortal, and immortally blessed; and no dark eclipse shall come over it, between death and the resurrection, to bury it in the gloom of utter unconsciousness, or to cause it to wander like a shadow in the dim realms of an intermediate state. “*I am the resurrection. Thy brother, who hath part in me, lives now as truly as I live.*”

“*Believest thou this?*” This was the point upon which depended their personal consolation in this bereavement. Faith in him as the Savior of the world, and as their Savior; as one who had atoned for sin, and was commissioned to bring life and immortality clearly to light; as one who, through his own death and resurrection, should open the way to heaven. This humble, heart-faith in Jesus, is what they specially needed at this crisis of their trial. It is what we all need, and must have, if we would be comforted when forsaken, bereaved, and broken-hearted with some crushing trial. And more than we know can this faith — the breathing of the life of Jesus in us, the bright cloud around us in which he walked — bring strength and comfort in the hour of mortal



sorrow and bitterness. And hence Christ specially proposes to the bereaved sisters faith in him as their only comfort.

“Believest thou this?” There is something beautiful in the humble modesty and yet whole-heartedness of Martha’s reply. It was half evasive, and its only fulness was that of the heart. “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of God, who should come into the world.” It was the spontaneous expression of her faith in Jesus, as the son of God, the Savior, the resurrection and the life. And, as if now satisfied and comforted, she goes to call Mary, that she may participate in the words of consolation that fell from the Master’s lips.

#### THE RESURRECTION SCENE.

“Lo! Jesus’ power the sleep of death hath broken,  
And wiped the tear from sorrow’s drooping eye!  
Look up, ye mourners, hear what He hath spoken—  
‘He that believes on me shall never die.’”

Let us go with the Master and these sorrowing sisters to the grave of Lazarus. We have sympathized with them in their sorrow, we will also share in their joys. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep,” is the admonition of the inspired Apostle.

When Jesus saw Mary at his feet in tears, and the Jews that came with her weeping, he was deeply moved.

Although conscious of a power mightier than death, and knowing how soon that shadow of death would be turned into the morning; yet, as he stood there, and the awful disasters of sin flashed before his omniscient eye, and he beheld the bereavement and agony of the mourners, he groaned in spirit and was troubled. And as he goes with those stricken hearts to the sepulchre, conscious of his triumph over the grave, he is touched to tears, and we see the tenderness of his humanity, and the majesty of the Godhead, blended in that scene, "Jesus wept." How has the heart of the world lingered over this shortest sentence of the Bible! How has it stood pictured to the heart a thing of beauty and of majesty, and a joy forever. The son of God in tears! Thanks be to God for that attitude of the Savior, and for his tears! "For those tears of the divine man are links binding us immediately to the throne of God, and the rainbow which is around it." Those tears, it has been beautifully said, are like stars which sparkle for the comfort of our sorrowing humanity; once beheld, they may be said to be always on the firmament, but are never seen without reminding us of the grave over which they rose.

He had just proclaimed himself to the bereaved friends at Bethany, as "the resurrection and the life;" and now he will actualize the declaration with a voice that shall startle the dead, and rob the grave of victory. In silent majesty the son of God steps to the mouth of the sepulchre, and says, "Take away the stone." An awful

suspense pervades that sorrowful group, as He lifts his tearful eyes to heaven in the prayer, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me."

"He ceased,—  
And for a minute's space there was a hush,  
As if th' angelic watchers of the world  
Had stay'd the pulses of all breathing things,  
To listen to that prayer."

As the deep and tremulous tones of that prayer still thrilled through the listening group, and the sisters, in breathless suspense, are trembling with alternate doubt and expectancy, the omnific, life-giving word is spoken — "Lazarus, come forth."

"Come forth," he cries, "thou dead!"  
O God! what means that strange and sudden sound  
That murmurs from the tomb, that ghastly head  
With funeral fillets bound!  
It is a *living form*!—  
The loved, the lost, the *won* —  
Won from the grave, corruption, and the worm.  
And is not this the Son  
Of God? they whispered, while the sisters poured  
Their gratitude in tears; for *they* had known the Lord."

It seemed to them, just roused from their delirium of sorrow, like some strange dark dream of the night when one waketh. And yet it is no dream—no wild phantom; what they see is no illusion of the fancy, no sweet hope merely—it is a blessed reality—it is their brother returned from the land of darkness and mystery—



“And Mary with her dark veil thrown aside,  
Ran to him swiftly, and cried, *Lazarus!*  
My brother Lazarus! and tore away  
The napkin she had bound about his head—  
And touch’d the warm lips with her fearful hand,  
And on his neck fell weeping.”

Oh! with what feelings of adoring gratitude, did Lazarus and his sisters kneel together in their evening worship! Never before had they gathered around their altar of prayer with such ecstasy of joy, such intense family feeling, such unutterable gratitude to Him, who had turned the shadow of death into the morning, and given them, the “oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” We now take our leave of this home-scene; and after this chastening of the Lord, it will live in our memory more than ever, as the united, happy, sanctified, beautiful *Home of Bethany*.

We have been communing with affliction in the family, and we have heard the voice of joy from the chambers of mourning and death. May we realize, that “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart.” Let us improve the lessons of this visitation in thought, to the home of sickness and death.

1. Let us not expect that our homes can be exempted from this common affliction of our humanity. Sooner or later, sickness and sorrow will invade our households, and our happy homes will be overcast with the shadows of

death. And there is much in what we have seen of the Lord's dealings with the afflicted family of Bethany, which, if remembered, will serve to comfort our hearts, and give us peace and resignation, when the days of darkness come.

To the Christian family, sickness will come as it came to Bethany, on a mission of mercy. And, however painful in the endurance, it will be sanctified not only to the member afflicted, but to the entire household. So that we may welcome to our families, not only the angel of gladness, but the angel of affliction, for they are alike God's messengers of goodness.

“Evil and good before him stand,  
Their mission to perform.”

How comforting when a member of the family is sick, to make our appeal for the loved one to the great physician, who is our friend and Savior! and like these sisters, who watched beside their languishing brother, send up our message to Jesus upon the throne, saying, “Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.”

And we may do this, conscious that he is as accessible to the voice of prayer now, as when he walked the land of Palestine; and that he is as near to the believing heart engaged in prayer, as he was to Mary in Bethany; conscious that he is the same in the tenderness of his sympathy as when he wept with those sorrowing sisters, and as mighty to save as when his voice rang through the

chambers of death, and recalled Lazarus from the slumbers of the grave. Oh! what a burden is lifted from the anxious heart watching beside some loved one in sickness, to know that we can tell the Savior, and feel that he is near and can help us. Parent, is your child sick; sister, is your brother sick; go to Jesus. Do all you can for the afflicted one, use every human expedient for their restoration, but neglect not Him who is the author of life, and in whose hand is the breath of every living thing. "Is any afflicted, let him pray." Is there some mother whose babe is fading in sickness? Is there some sister watching beside a brother in the agonies of death? pray,— "Blessed Savior, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Let not this beautiful blossom of my affections, let not this loved one of our household, waste away and die! You may utter such a prayer; yet, leaving the issue wholly in his hands, add with Christian resignation, "Oh! my Father, if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, thy will be done."

And, submissive to the divine will, committing the sick one thus in faith to the Lord of life, you can confidently leave the issues with God. If no answer come you will receive at heart this response, given to the sisters. "This sickness is for the glory of God." And that conviction entertained will relieve the anxious suspense, and enable the soul to believe that the sickness, whether for life or death, shall be for the divine glory. This answer of Christ to the message of the sisters gives a new and



sacred aspect to sickness. If personally afflicted we can console ourselves with the reflection, that though we cannot do much for the Savior's honor, we can bear in meekness and Christian patience our allotted sufferings, and thus glorify God. Lazarus lived in comparative obscurity; he is laid upon a bed of sickness, and it is there he may subserve the glory of God, as really as if engaged in the more public and active scenes of the ministry. And thus, we, though not called to achieve heroic deeds in the eyes of the world, may, by meek christian patience in the chamber of sickness, honor Christ. Or, if called to watch beside some one who is lingering on the couch of pain, we may, in kindly ministrations to the sick, honor Christ. The devotion of a sister or child, ministering for months beside an afflicted brother, or comforting through years the bed-ridden winter of a parent's age, may contain a holier martyrdom than any which the church has canonized.

There is, therefore, a present blessing in sickness to the Christian family. It is a blessing to the members afflicted. Perhaps he needed that prostration to deepen the sense of dependence upon God; perhaps it was needed to isolate him from the distractions of care and business, and leave him alone for thought, meditation, and prayer.

*Whatever* may be the particular need, the sickness, if it is borne in meekness and prayer, will be productive of spiritual improvement. There are lessons of patience and submission to be learned there—a mellowing of the spirit

in the cloudy autumn of weakness and debility. Just as of old the sick and blind were brought to Christ by affliction, so, many now are led through physical suffering to seek the salvation of their souls. Many can look back to scenes of trial and sickness, with gratitude to God.

“Blest trials those that cleanse from sin,  
And make the soul all pure within,  
Wean the fond mind from earthly toys,  
To seek and taste celestial joys.”

And, so, the other members of the family are indirectly blessed by the afflicted one. We know how a sick member of the household develops and exercises the sympathies and gentle ministrations of the other members. How it calls forth affection; how the heart will put forth a strength and richness of blessing never known before. Says one—“A crippled and suffering child seems the heaviest of domestic afflictions. Yet, once confided to our care, what an object of tender interest it becomes! What pure and gentle affections hover over it! What a web of soft and fostering duty is woven round it! It gives new value and beauty to life! We would keep it with us forever!”

Yes, the individual Christian, and the Christian family can unitedly say—“It is good for us that we have been afflicted.”

But the sickness and anxious watchings were the sad precursors of Death in the family of Bethany. And so, sooner or later, will that awful silence and overshadowing

cloud come to your home ! Death, stern, cold, inexorable, the “dread teacher,” that tells man of this life’s frailty and of a judgment to come, will come into your family. Sad, unutterably sad, is death, in a home without Christ and without hope.

But if it be a religious home, like that of Bethany, blessed with the friendship of Jesus, then the overshadowing cloud will be radiant with the bow, that

“Spans the earth, and forms a pathway to the skies.”

I have been in the Christian family when death came, not as the King of Terrors, but as the Prince of Peace. And as I saw the head meekly bowed to the visitation, or the eye raised in calm, bright hope to heaven, and I said with the silent sympathy and resigned acquiescence of the weeping household, “The work is done, the victory is gained ; thanks be to God, who giveth that victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I have seen an infant form, sweetly reposing on its last couch,—

“But there beam’d a smile  
So fix’d, so holy, from that cherub brow,  
Death gazed, and left it there. He dared not steal  
The signet-ring of Heaven.”

And as we repeated the words of the Saviour, “Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” the weeping parents responded in tones tremulous with emotion, but full of



Christian resignation, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Thus, not only sickness, but death, in the Christian family, is for the glory of God. How often does the last lingering sickness develop and beautify the Christian graces of the loved one, and canonize them for perpetual remembrance and admiration! How often does that touching decay of the body seem to be but the investing of the soul with immortal life and beauty! That pale cheek, that sweet composure of the countenance, that gentleness and gratitude to the ministering friends, that almost spiritual beaming of the eye; "and then, at length, when concealment is no longer possible, that last firm, triumphant, consoling discourse, and that last look of all mortal tenderness and immortal trust; what hallowed memories are these to soothe, to win us to goodness, to enrapture surviving love!" Such a death in the family leaves a parting benediction upon the Christian household.

"Dust to its narrow house beneath!

Soul to its place on high!

They that have seen thy look in death,

No more may fear to die!"

God grant us homes where Christ will love to linger, because welcomed by loving hearts. We know that afflictions must come even to such families. "Marys and Marthas must weep the world over; the sorrows of Bethany be revived in the homes of distant centuries and

undiscovered countries, till the lengthening sisterhood of suffering clasp hands around the globe." Yes! afflictions will come, and Death, the spoiler, desolate our beautiful homes; but He who wept with the sisters of Bethany, and poured the resurrection light on that weeping household, is our friend and Savior, and will be with us in our bereavements, with grace, and words of unspeakable consolation. And when our loved ones die, we know that our Redeemer liveth, and that whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die!

And that scene at the grave of Lazarus, the brother called up from the sleep of death and clasped by the enraptured sisters, is a prefiguration of every Christian household on the morn of the resurrection. If we can say of our families, as John Eliot said of his, "We are all in Christ or with Christ;" then that touching resurrection scene at Bethany is an emblem of our family circle, on the resurrection morn—the joyous, triumphant, reunion of the loved—

. . . "No wanderer lost  
The family in heaven!"

## Chapter Sixth.

EMMAUS; OR, THE HOME OF OLD AGE.

“Abide with us: for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent.”

“And while the shadows round his path descend,  
And down the vale of age his footsteps tend,  
Peace o’er his bosom sheds his soft control,  
And throngs of gentlest memories charm the soul;  
Then, weaned from earth, he turns his steadfast eye  
Beyond the grave, whose verge he falters nigh,  
Surveys the brightening regions of the blest,  
And like a wearied pilgrim, sinks to rest.”

LATE in the afternoon of the first Christian Sabbath, two of the disciples were on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Around their mountain path is early spring with its beauty and song; but these lonely travellers are so absorbed in their own thoughts, that their hearts feel no sympathy with rejoicing nature. They walk on and are sad; for their fondest hopes and dreams of life have been buried in the grave with Jesus. As they went on their way, talking of the thing which had happened, sorrowful and dejected, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. They knew not the Lord, and yet there was a strange fascination about the spirit and speech of this stranger that made their hearts burn within them, as he talked to them by the way. If he were not their Lord,



he was at least so like him, that in looking at him they seemed to behold the twilight dawn of their risen Lord.

His conversation, in its effects on them, resembled the rosy glimmer that gilds the morning sky, which, though not the sun himself, is the mild herald of the day. As they communed by the way, hope dawned on the darkness of despair. The breathings of divine promises, from the lips of this mysterious stranger, had calmed their troubled thoughts and diffused a heavenly peace through their desponding hearts. As they draw nigh unto the village, the disciples urge the stranger to turn aside with them to their humble home. They press their appeal by the lateness of the hour, for the shadows of coming night were falling round their path. "Abide with us; for it is towards evening and the day is far spent." The stranger turned aside to tarry for the night, and in his, "Peace be with you," revealed himself the Savior whom they loved.

There is much in that afternoon walk and evening scene at Emmaus, which we may profitably apply to Christian experience. It is true, Jesus cannot enter personally our homes as our guest, and abide there in actual, visible presence. But the spirit of Jesus, his truth and love, may enter our hearts, and thus abide with us in the peace, spiritual communion, and immortal hopes of our households. And how beautiful, when the day is far spent in the serene and holy twilight, to join those disciples in spirit, and ask the Savior to abide with us in our homes.

This prayer for the Savior's presence, may be expressed at the time of natural evening.

## I.

### EVENING.

“Morn is the time to act, noon to endure;  
But, Oh! if thou wouldst keep thy spirit pure,  
Turn from the beaten path, by worldlings trod,  
Go forth at eventide, in heart to walk with God.”

How appropriate this prayer of the two disciples at the close of every natural day! When the din of business, and the fever of excitement subside with the twilight of evening, and we are gathered in our quiet homes, how natural to turn our thoughts to Jesus, with the prayer, “Abide with us!” For who can speak to us then as He, of our past and fleeting hours? Who, as He, can soothe our cares and calm our troubled spirits, touch our hearts with penitence for the past, or inspire us with hope for the future? How in such hours of the closing day have we felt and sung with the devout poet —

“I love to steal awhile away  
From ev'ry cumb'ring care,  
And spend the hours of setting day,  
In humble, grateful prayer.”

There is something in the natural evening that is in beautiful harmony with the presence of Christ; something which prompts the prayer, “abide with us.”

*Peace comes with evening.* It is a gentle and a soothing season. But the peace of Christ abiding with us will make it yet more peaceful; because it is the answer of the internal to the external; the quietness of the soul responding to the serene twilight, rendering it more profound and grateful. And in this secret silence of the mind, the hushed quietude of our spiritual nature, the soul is brought into communion with the unseen and eternal.

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,  
With prayer and praise agree.”

The soft broad shadows come with evening. They close round us as if they would envelop and shade the fretted and fevered spirit, before giving it time for restoration. But how much safer and more quiet is the spirit, if, by the presence of Jesus, it claims a higher protection, and takes refuge under the shadow of the Almighty. Then the shadows of night seem like a curtain from the hand of God,

“To shade the couch where his children repose.”

*Sleep comes with evening.* When in that still and shadowy season we gather for the evening prayer, when we are pitching the tent of another day's journey, and would lift up our souls to Him, who looks upon us, and whose purity is above us like that pure heaven, we may say to Jesus, “Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” Abide with us, that we may feel that our sins are for-



gotten; abide with us, as we lie down to gentle sleep, that it may be pleasant and refreshing to us, "that pure thoughts may keep the portals of our dreams, and God's blessing hold watch over us!" Sweetly will sleep fall upon our eyelids, if we have been holding communion with Jesus; and, as if we heard from him the words of kind permission, "Sleep on now, and take your rest," we can commend ourselves in confidence to the Watchman of Israel, and lie down to rest,

"As in the embraces of our God,  
Or on our Savior's breast."

## II.

### THE EVENING OF LIFE.

Without old age,

"Life's busy day would want its tranquil even,  
And earth would lose her stepping-stone to Heaven."

Human life is called a day. It has its morning, noon, and evening.

Old age is the evening of Life. And shall not the old disciple earnestly desire the Savior to abide with him? Has he been with us through the day? Did our hearts seek him early, even in the morning; or if we wandered, did we hear his voice and return? Oh! if he has walked with us through life's day, how shall we urge him to be

more and more near to us, as the darkness falls faster around us. If we have had sweet communion with Christ in our past life, we surely cannot dispense with his presence when the night is coming on. "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." This is peculiarly a prayer for *old age*. Already the long shadows fall before its tottering feet. The pulses of desire beat more feebly; the joys of earth are fading; many relationships of life are broken; friends are dropping away; the eyes are growing dim; and the feeble limbs falter among unbroken shadows. Oh! then will the aged believer utter the prayer of these disciples: "Abide with me, O Christ, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent."

"Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide,  
The darkness thickens; Lord! with me abide,  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Friend of the helpless, oh! *abide* with me!"

Happy is the evening of life that is brightened and cheered by the presence of Jesus! Happy were the two disciples on the day of the resurrection, when, in their walk to Emmaus, they invited their mysterious companion home, and found their risen Lord revealed to them in the guest of their humble meal! Blessed was the conversation, and sweet the communion in the home at Emmaus, with Jesus as their evening guest! Calm and cheerful will be the home of old age, with the Savior's presence and benediction. Happy those who, in their early years,

sought his friendship, and, through life's weary day, walked with the companionship of the Son of God, and who can invite him to abide with them as the night comes on, not as a stranger, but as a familiar friend!

Sad indeed is old age without such companionship; without the presence of Him sent by the Father to keep us ever in his love. Desolate is the home of the worldling as the light of life is fading, and the world is becoming to him "a banquet hall deserted," with vacant seats, expiring lamps, smouldering ashes, and empty cups for cheer. How cheerless and desolate is the home of age without the consolation and hopes of religion! The cherished objects of life have departed. The past is full of painful recollections, the present full of disquietude and remorse, and the future all dark and dreary! Age without faith, is a wreck upon the shore of life, a ruin upon the beetling cliffs of time, tottering to its fall, and about to be engulfed and lost forever! Oh! to end life thus, losing its home on earth, but finding none with God. This is desolation, indeed, in which the twilight of evening deepens into a starless night; in which the lamps of life go out, and the soul is left to wail in the outer darkness forever!

But Christian old age has the abiding presence of Christ, and is cheerful and happy. True cheerfulness springs from the love of God in the soul; and the Savior, who most manifests that love, is the most cheering of all companions for the evening of life. We need his genial



spirit always, alike to give us patience in trial, and true joy in our blessings for all our years. But when it is towards evening, and the great night is at hand, then, especially, do we need Christian cheerfulness to give us patience under the change. "See God as Christ reveals him in the earlier seasons of life, and we shall not fail to see him during its closing years. He whom we sought as Guide, will stay with us as Comforter, and his glory will shine out at sunset, even more blessedly than at noon-day."

Blessed is such an evening of life ! With Christ, years bring a brighter charm than they can take away. It is true, the physical infirmities of age often obstruct the manifestation of the mind's activity, and the soul needs a new form to correspond with its growing life ; it seems too bright to linger in the enfeebled body, whose ear is dull, and whose eye is dim, whose pulse beats too slowly to keep pace with the inner life ; for whilst the outward man is enfeebled by age, the inward man is often renewed with growing strength and capacities with revolving years. There is no age to the mind. Does thought grow old as it wins new majesty at every stage of its progress, and presses on to new realms of light ? Does love grow old as it gains new strength, and rises to its highest beauty in the last earthly moments — the last spiritual victory ? Does devotion grow old as it presses nearer to the throne of God ? There is no old age to the Christian. He is strong in faith, and in the graces which come to him

through faith. He can say, with the Apostle, "though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day."

"Joy and crown of a true life—new childhood—second morning of our being, so exemplified in the experience of the ripest men! A return to youth, not merely by the strange renewal of young remembrances, but a regenerating of the affections, a renewal of that spontaneous trusting reason so beautiful in childhood? Blessed old age, so entering the kingdom of heaven like a little child, and winning youth and childhood to itself by its holy wisdom and loving counsel! Nearer God than ever, it partakes more largely of His grace, and all past experience and labor, all thoughts, affections, purposes, seem but to have been shaping the mind and heart into a vessel for holding the precious effluence from above. The disputing reason, the impulsive feelings, the daring will, all seem to kneel down then in faith before the mercy-seat, and be ennobled by the service and exalted by the obedience. Imagination itself, before so wayward and sometimes rebellious, becomes the servant of faith, and, true to the Infinite Creator, joins him in creating the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The noblest genius ever seen on earth joins with the simplest piety in the invitation to God's Beloved — "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." The thinner the veil of this earthly tabernacle, the more

need of the light that can show the Divine glory and the eternal world through its perishable material.”\*

Happy is the evening of a life spent in the service of Jesus! The past is full of silent blessing and thrilling memories—the present, full of peace and hope—the future full of light and glory. To such an one the evening of life is the “dawn of bliss,” the youth of his immortality. Life’s labors done, light from heaven falls on his path, and the good angel pointing upward, says,

“Thither, thither, shalt thou go,  
Immortal light, and life forever more.”

And how often is the kindness of the Lord to the aged Christian, specially manifested in his gentle dismissal! The day of life spent in piety and love, comes in hope to an evening calm and lovely; and though the sun declines, the shadows that he leaves behind are only to curtain the spirit into rest. How beautifully and touchingly has this parting with life in old age been sung by an English poet:†—

“Life! we’ve been long together,  
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.  
’Tis hard to part when friends are dear,  
Perhaps ’twill cost a sigh, a tear;  
Then steal away, give little warning,  
Choose thine own time;  
Say not good night, but in some happier clime,  
Bid me good morning.”

Let me say to the younger members of the household, deal gently and reverently with your elders. Be kind

\* Osgood.

† Mrs. Barbauld.



and courteous to the old. They need your sympathy. Through this bright world they move mistily and wearily. It is with them the day, "when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves; and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low . . . . and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail." At such a time of dimness and feebleness, give them your gentlest words, and readiest sympathy; "for youth is never so beautiful, as when it acts as a guardian angel or a ministering spirit to old age."

And how touching, in view of such a coming time, is the exhortation of Scripture — "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Do not squander the precious season of youth, in vanity and forgetfulness of God, lest you should come to a dreary, joyless, hopeless old age. Seek the Savior in the morning, and walk with him in your day of strength, and he will bless you with his brighter presence when the evening comes.

But you may never see the evening of old age. The shadows often fall from the mountain before we look for them. The night of death often comes down suddenly, and unushered by the gradual evening. Who knoweth but that it is toward evening now, though not a shadow dim

the air? Who knoweth but that the day is far spent with us, though not many of its golden sands may have fallen? The evening of *death*, often overshadows life's very noon-tide. How should the young engage the Savior to abide with them, even in the morning and at noon. When you know that death may be near at any moment, how can you enjoy peace and safety without the abiding presence of Jesus? Not knowing when the shadows of evening may fall, your prayer should be, Abide with me always!

“Abide with me from morn till eve,  
For without thee, I cannot live.”

And happy, if whilst walking with Jesus in the morning of life, the night of death should come! As the shadows begin to fall, you can say to the Savior by your side, Abide with me, oh, Christ! for it is toward evening.

“Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes,  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies;  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!”

Let me commend my aged friends to the sympathy of the Savior. Your heart breathes that touching prayer of the Psalmist—“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.” He will never leave you nor forsake you. The Savior who has walked with you, through the day, will not leave you as your eyes are growing dim, and your feet begin to halt among unbroken shadows. No—He will be

nearer to you than ever, for He knows your frame, and is touched with a feeling of your infirmities. Only say to him, with intenser faith and feeling, Abide with me, O Jesus, for it is toward evening! And he will make his grace to abound in you. "What are you doing?" said a minister, as he one day visited a feeble old man who dwelt in a windy hovel. "What are you doing?" as he saw him sitting beneath the dripping rafters in his smoky chamber, with his Bible upon his knee. "Oh, sir! I am sitting under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to my taste!"

Thus may you abide with Jesus, and raise gently, joyfully, humbly, the Christian's vesper hymn, responsive to the matin song; and as the daylight dies, welcome anew the bringer of light uncreated and immortal. Say, Abide we me, O Jesus, for it is evening!

"In age and feebleness extreme,  
Who shall a helpless worm redeem?  
Jesus my only hope thou art,  
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;  
O, could I catch a smile from Thee,  
And drop into Eternity!"



## THE HEAVENLY HOME.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions.” — JESUS.

“Home celestial! Home eternal!  
Home uprear’d by power Supernal!  
Home, no change or loss that fearest,  
From afar my soul thou cheerest;

\* \* \* \* \*

Grant me, Savior, with thy Blessed,  
Of thy Rest to be possessed,  
And amid the joys it bringeth,  
Sing the song that none else singeth.”

HILDEBERT, A.D. 1133.

The Savior revealed the eternal world as the soul’s true home. Lovely as is the Christian family on earth, it is only prefatory to the more genial and ecstatic communion of the family in heaven. Sweet and satisfying, beyond all else on earth, are the joys of a Christian home.

“The fellowship of kindred minds,  
Is like to that above.”

But how frail the tie that “makes the members one!” How few earthly homes without the sad memorial of some one that is gone! How soon the sweet bonds and kindred fellowship of the household will be broken! Soon must we leave these pleasant homes of earth!

“And by the hearth we now sit round,  
Some other circle will be found.”

But the words of Jesus bear our thoughts upward to the “many mansions.” “Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” For many from our households has this prayer been fulfilled; and for those who yet remain, it inspires the precious hope of the reunion of the whole Christian family in Heaven. Here Christ abides with us; there we shall be with him, that we may behold his glory. With *Christ* in our *Father’s House*! Eternal home of the *Christian Family*!

“Oh! the delights, the heav’nly joys,  
The glories of the place,  
When Jesus sheds the brightest beams,  
Of his o’erflowing grace!”

Oh! my Christian friends, let us earnestly and prayerfully strive to make our homes on earth Christian in form and spirit. Let us set our houses in the spiritual order of faith, and prayer, and love; then shall no loved one be missed from the heavenly Home; then, absent from the body, we shall be present with the Father, and with his son, Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

“O Lord, that wisdom may we know,  
Which yields a life of peace below;  
So, in the world to follow this,  
May each repeat, in words of bliss,  
We’re all — all here!”

THE END.

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"How oft, heart-sick and sore,  
I've wished I were, once more,  
A little child."—MRS. SOUTHEY.

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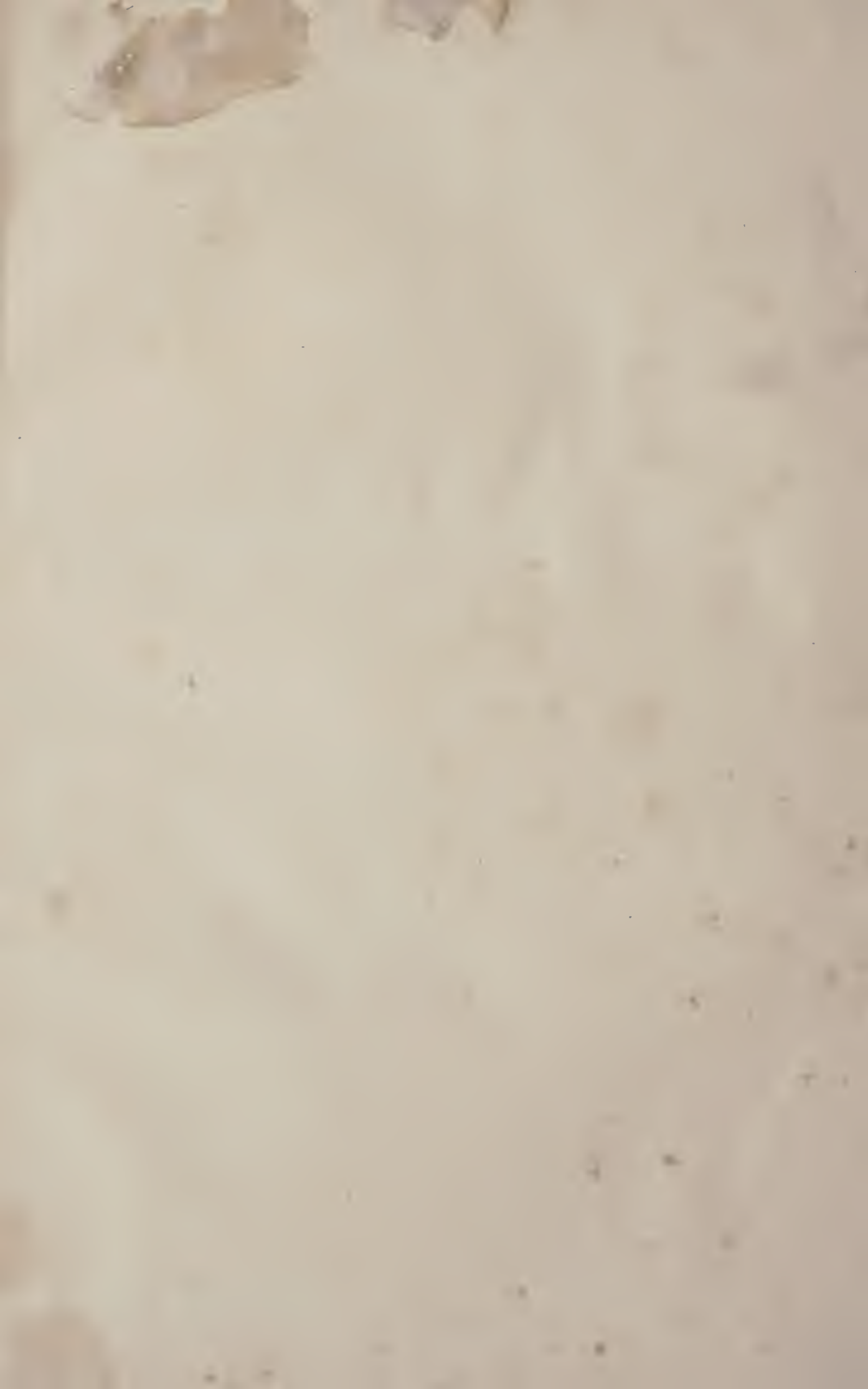
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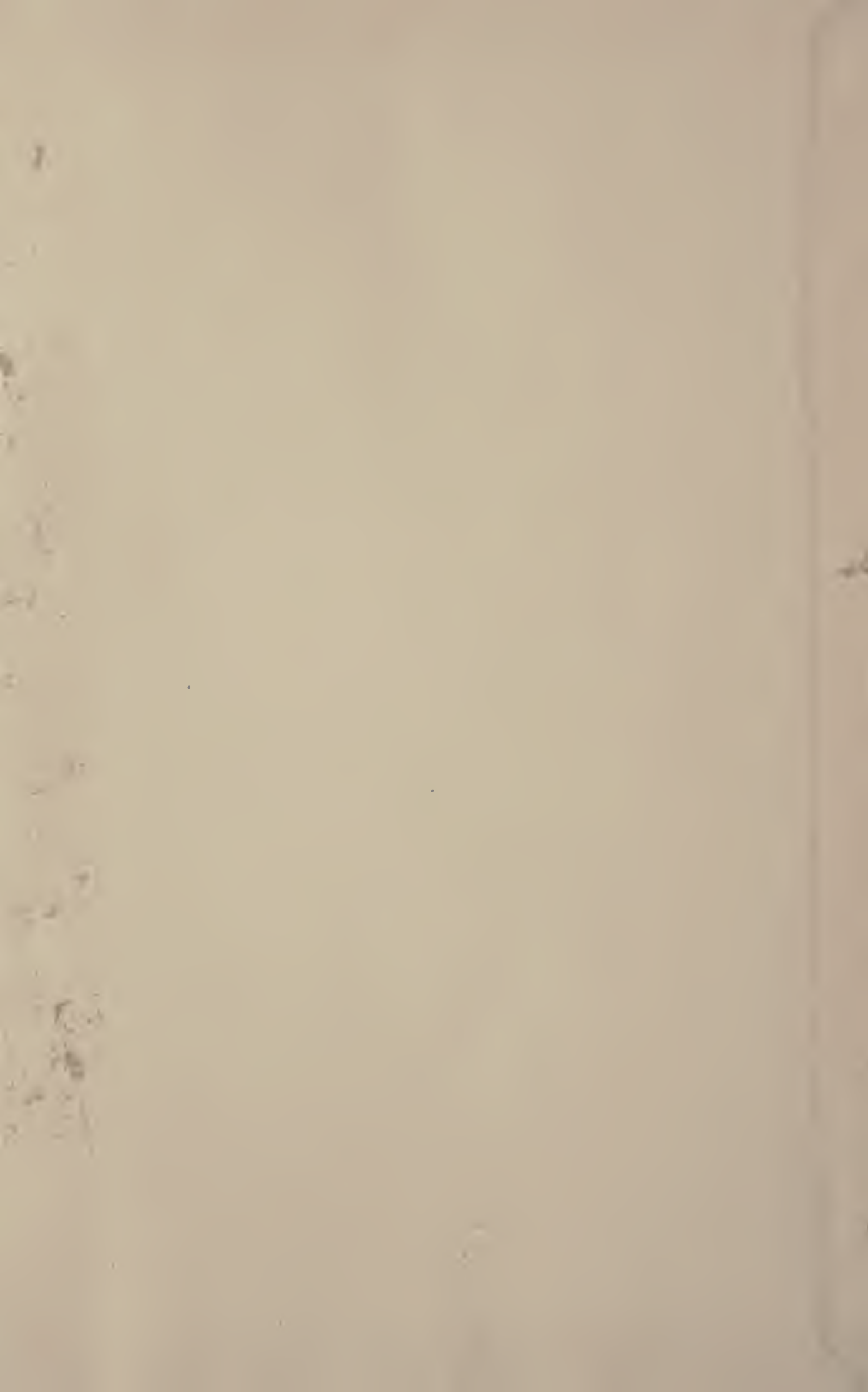


















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